Memoirs of Dr Eduard BENEŠ

FROM MUNICH TO NEW WAR AND NEW VICTORY

GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN

The present volume of the late President Beneš's Memoirs tells the inside story of how Hitler achieved the destruction of Czechoslovakia and how Dr. Beneš, undaunted, rebuilt brick by brick the foundations of his country's independence in exile —this time in Great Britain instead of in Geneva and Paris as when he and the great President Masaryk first built them during World War I.

The book contains a record of Dr. Beneš's private talks with a number of internationally known figures, including Sir Winston Churchill, President Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin as well as the texts of various official documents dealing with Czechoslovak affairs not previously available in English. Written primarily to give the Czechoslovak nation an account of their President's stewardship during the war, it takes its place alongside his previous book, *My War Memoirs*, as an indispensable historical record of the views and actions of a man who for twenty-five years was one of Europe's most prominent statesmen. It carries the story of his activities down to early 1945 when the Czechoslovak Government went home from London via Moscow.

The Memoirs have been translated and annotated by Godfrey Lias, author of *Beneš of Czechoslavakia*. Mr. Lias was in constant touch with Dr. Beneš throughout the war, first as head of the Czechoslovak Section of the Ministry of Information and then of the Czechoslovak Region of the Political Warfare Executive. After the war he was Correspondent of *The Times* in Prague for four years until he was expelled from Czechoslovakia by the Communist Government a few months after President Beneš's death in September 1948.

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MEMOIRS OF DR EDUARD BENEŠ

BY EDUARD BENEŠ

MY WAR MEMOIRS

BY GODFREY LIAS

BENEŠ OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

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TRANSLATED BY GODFREY LIAS

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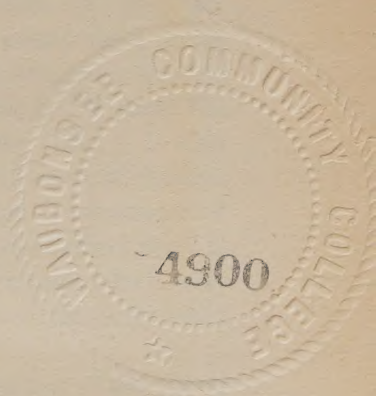

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Translated from the Czech original

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INTRODUCTION

THE present volume is the first of three which the late President Dr. Eduard Beneš intended to write as a continuation of his earlier Memoirs published between the two world wars. He felt it to be his duty to give the people of Czechoslovakia an account of his stewardship of their affairs while he was in exile from the time of the disaster of Munich—their twentieth century Battle of the White Mountain for which many of them held him to be responsible—down to his return to Prague at the end of the second World War and the triumphant re-establishment of Czechoslovakia within its original boundaries. The series was to have been at once a justification of his own handling of the affairs of the Czechoslovak State during this critical period and a review of the work of his colleagues and opponents so that their countrymen could see where praise and punishment were due and could also set a clear course for their Fatherland towards a prosperous and secure future.

Only one of the three volumes was completed. While Dr. Beneš was compiling the second, battling with increasing physical disabilities as he did so, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia staged its long-projected and well-planned *coup d'état* of February 25th, 1948. The strains and stresses of this grievous blow, comparable to those he had undergone at Munich, completed the undermining of his health. He left the Presidential Castle, the Hradčany, on February 29th never to return. On June 7th, 1948, he resigned and on September 3rd, 1948, he passed away at his country home at Sezimovo Ústí. Though Volume Two was never finished a comprehensive draft of it is in existence setting forth in full detail Dr. Beneš's account of the Munich crisis. As for Volume Three it is only known that Dr. Beneš planned to include in it the inner history of the final phase of the war from the time when the Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia left London for Moscow and later established itself at Košice in East Slovakia behind the lines of the Soviet armies which were slowly forcing the retreating Germans westwards out of Czechoslovakia and towards their final débacle.

The first part of the Memoirs starts with a recapitulation of the events which led to Munich, skips Munich itself and goes on to deal with the period between Munich and the moment when the Provisional Czechoslovak Government was about to leave London for Košice. Chronologically speaking, most of the volume should follow, instead of preceding, the account of Munich. But from the political standpoint, it was obviously

desirable to inform the Czechoslovak Nation as soon as possible what had been done in their name abroad while they themselves were under Nazi domination. They had themselves experienced Munich and its effects. But they were almost entirely ignorant of the steps which Dr. Beneš and his collaborators had taken outside Czechoslovakia to neutralise the effects of Munich. If the Communists had not seized power, and if he himself had been well enough, Dr. Beneš would next have rubbed in the lesson of Munich in the hope of averting a repetition of that disaster. Finally, he intended to give the Nation the political background of the military liberation of the country—how the so-called Košice programme came to be adopted as the common political programme of the Coalition Government, what the relations were between that Government and the Russians and between the different political parties of which the Government was made up.

The first volume was published in Prague in the autumn of 1947, and some 250,000 copies were sold in the six months before the Communist *coup d'état*. Soon after this arbitrary act, all the published works of President Beneš, and of his predecessor, President Masaryk, were withdrawn from the bookshops. Within one year these two founders of the democratic Czechoslovak Republic were branded as traitors and their names execrated —cautiously at first and then with growing, and insolent, outspokenness. In less than four years, the National Independence Day—October 28th—which marked the consummation of the years of struggle under their leadership before and during the first World War, had been reduced to the anniversary of Nationalisation in 1945. Officially, National independence now dates not from 1918 but only from May 9th, 1945, the day on which units of the Red Army allegedly 'rescued' Prague from the Germans. Actually, of course, the Red Army never rescued Prague. It simply arrived the day after the last German forces had been overpowered by a detachment of the army of General Vlasov, the Russian commander who went over to the Germans after his capture and recruited several divisions for them from among his compatriots. Some of the Vlasov troops were stationed near Prague when the citizens of the capital rose against the Germans on May 5th, 1945, and they hoped by changing sides again even at the last moment to avert their inevitable punishment. So they threw themselves into the fighting on the side of the Czechs and by May 8th German resistance had ended. Marshal Koniev's soldiers reached Prague on the following day when the fighting was over. But it is their entry into the capital which the Czechs and Slovaks are now forced to commemorate regardless of the fact that if the independence of Czechoslovakia really

dates only from the end of the second World War, every prior international act, including the country's treaty of alliance with the U.S.S.R. in 1943, has no validity. It may be added that nearly all the actual leaders of the Prague rising were not Communists but supporters of President Beneš. They have either been executed like General Kutlwašr, who directed it, or imprisoned or have had to flee their country in order to save their lives.

One of President Masaryk's favourite sayings was: 'A lie has short legs'. And the motto of the Czechoslovak Republic was and still is: 'Truth prevails'. Sooner or later, truth will certainly catch up with these and other Communist distortions of Czechoslovak history. According to the Communist version now current, Dr. Beneš, like Professor Masaryk before him, was an imperialist agent, a life-long enemy of the Soviet Union and, therefore, an enemy of the Czech and Slovak 'masses'. Needless to say, the accusation is nowhere borne out by the writings of either. So far as Dr. Beneš himself is concerned we see him in these Memoirs as a sincere friend of the West who is also hoping for the ultimate triumph of Socialism. He is constantly urging the importance of friendly relations with the Soviet Union. The present Soviet-Czechoslovak Alliance on which the relations of the Czechoslovak 'People's Democracy' and the U.S.S.R. are still based is his work. We see him also as a convinced advocate of public ownership of all the means of production though he stresses his desire that this should come about gradually through evolution and the freely-expressed wishes of the electorate instead of by violent revolution and dictatorial methods. Furthermore he constantly reiterates his firm belief in the possibility of the peaceful co-existence of different types of regime in terms which should be entirely acceptable to Moscow. It is true that occasionally the Memoirs also show signs of increasing apprehension about Communist intentions. Dr. Beneš more than hints his belief that they intended to stage 'a violent revolution' and warns them plainly that 'they must impose some restraint on themselves' (p. 285). He goes on to quote Pushkin: 'Remember, young world, that the best and most permanent changes are those which have their origin in a moral improvement without any commotion at all.' And he evidently was not sure whether the Anglo-Soviet Alliance of 1942 would continue to operate after the war. The Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty of December, 1943, he said 'was intentionally and consciously linked to the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of May 26th, 1942. *At the time**I firmly believed that this treaty would continue in operation after the war ended. Was I right or wrong?' (p. 285).

His fears of a possible Communist revolution were realised almost

*My italics. (Tr.).

before the ink in which he expressed them was dry. From the moment that Stalin forced the Czechoslovak Government to withdraw its acceptance of the invitation to attend the Marshall Plan Conference in Paris in July, 1947, it was clear to him as to everyone else that Czechoslovakia was no longer a free agent. The latent crisis finally came to a head in the following February when the hasty action of the non-Communist Ministers in resigning from the Government played into the hands of the Communists. Some of these Ministers who are now in exile have stated that President Beneš knew and approved of their decision to resign. I have very good reasons for believing that this is incorrect. If they informed him of this intention they can only have done so in terms which left with him the impression that they simply intended to stay away from meetings of the Cabinet until the Communists accepted the decisions of the majority of the Ministers. This of course the Communists never had any intention of doing. The coup had to take place. It could only have been prevented by the use of force. With the Russians close at hand and the West holding aloof, President Beneš, as at the time of Munich, decided that force would be the greater of two evils. In these circumstances the resignation issue is not of great practical importance except in so far as it throws light on the political acumen of those concerned. In this respect it can only be stated that the judgment of the Czechoslovak people immediately after the event was much less unfavourable to President Beneš than to his Ministers. When he died, less than seven months later, they wept, mourning him as the one man in their country who could have saved democracy and freedom had he received sufficient support. Were they right or wrong?

Throughout his life, right up to and even after the day when he found himself for the second time faced with the impossible task of standing alone against a ruthless dictatorship, Dr. Beneš was an optimist. He never accepted Munich as final. Though nearing his end, he did not accept the Communist coup of February, 1948, as final either. But by that time, so far as he was concerned, the zest for a fight had gone out of him. But he kept his conviction that the Communist regime of force would not last for ever.

During the war, of course, the President's combativeness was still gloriously alive. We see him in his Memoirs starting to get ready for the coming fray even before he left Czechoslovakia a few weeks after Munich. Soon he is in the United States discussing the situation with Roosevelt, with Cordell Hull, with Sumner Welles. He fired his first broadside when Hitler broke his pledged word and occupied Prague on March 15th, 1939. Sure that war would soon break out, Dr. Beneš returned to London in the

summer and, equally convinced that Hitler would be beaten, because both the United States and the U.S.S.R. would ultimately be forced to fight the Nazis, he threw all he had into the allied cause, including that gallant little band of Czech and Slovak airmen who contributed materially to the defeat of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain. But except for a passing reference here and there, Dr. Beneš says nothing in this volume about the military side of the war; nothing about the exploits of the Czechoslovak forces, nothing about his own personal experiences during the bombing of London. The only military event which moved him to depart from his unwritten rule was Stalingrad on which he comments with a certain naïveté which betrays not simply that he had no real conception of what a battle is actually like but also—perhaps for the only time in his writings—that he had a heart and human emotions as well as a brain.

Though Dr. Beneš gave his book the somewhat cumbrous sub-title of *From Munich to New War and New Victory*, its real theme is the revocation of the Munich settlement. In bringing this about, Dr. Beneš can claim both sole credit and complete success in almost every respect except one—he was quite unable to secure a *modus vivendi* between the Czech and German inhabitants of the country. Whose fault this was is best left to the reader to decide. The real issue between Dr. Beneš and Wenzel Jaksch, the Sudeten German Social Democratic leader, concerned the right of secession—a right which even President Lincoln refused to concede when faced with a similar demand. The German minority—President Beneš wholly rejected the word Sudeten—demanded complete autonomy within the Czechoslovak State. The Czechs, under the leadership of the President, held this to mean that at any moment the Germans could walk out on their partners and adhere to the German Reich. They saw no secure future for a State so constituted. They therefore insisted on a unitary State in which the will of the majority was to prevail though minorities were to have full cultural rights and equal opportunity (as well as responsibility) with the majority. The Germans flatly rejected the idea of a unitary State because they had no faith in Czech promises of equality.

The gap could not be bridged. The Czechs could not forget that the German population of Bohemia and Moravia had provided the excuse for Munich. The Germans could not forget either that the Czechs had not always treated them as equals in the period between the two world wars or their own relationship to the Germans of Germany. In these circumstances it was inevitable that in the end the Czechs should demand the expulsion, or 'transfer' of the great mass of the Germans. Dr. Beneš makes it clear that the British, French and American Governments, as well as the

Soviet Government, agreed to this policy. In the parallel case of the Magyar minority in Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, there was no such agreement although the problem was almost precisely similar. Some of the Magyars were driven out of Slovakia before the Allies intervened. Others were exchanged at a later date for Slovaks in Hungary. But most of the Magyar inhabitants of Slovakia are still there. But of the 3,500,000 Germans in the Republic at the end of the war only some 250,000 now remain.

This volume of Memoirs deals with the political negotiations which led to the transfer of these unfortunate people. It shows the steps by which the lone figure of the ex-President in exile gradually built up a Government round him and negotiated once again as President of his country with the three great figures of the war, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin. If the author goes into seemingly unimportant details and not infrequently repeats himself, let it be remembered that he was clearing his reputation as a statesman in the eyes of his own people, not those of the world.

It should perhaps be emphasised that though the only possible translation of the Czech name for this book, Pamětí, is Memoirs, the volume is not really autobiographical and contains comparatively few reminiscences or impressions. Its purpose is to vindicate the author's statesmanship by giving an account of his thought processes during the period of his fight against Munich and by recounting the various concrete steps by which revocation was accomplished and the Czechoslovak State re-established within its former frontiers. It was written by a professed Czechoslovak rather than a Czech, and for Czechs and Slovaks, especially the former. Dr. Beneš's literary style, as even his countrymen will readily admit, is often hard to follow. He takes liberties with syntax and grammar and his sentences are sometimes so long that their character and direction change before they come to an end. Thus their meaning is not always to be grasped at the first, or even a second, reading. Nor, of course, does the Czech language resemble English either in its construction or its metaphors. It has, for example, no definite or indefinite article. It has fewer tenses than ours as well as more cases. I have therefore felt it necessary, and permissible, to take many liberties of my own with the original in order to make the book conform as far as possible to English standards of composition. But I hope I have succeeded in preserving the author's sense and meaning when—or rather, by—departing from literality. I am encouraged in this hope by the fact that I have had the benefit of several most competent helpers, some of whom must unfortunately remain anonymous at present for reasons which need no elaboration. I may, however, express my gratitude quite openly to Professor R. Betts of the School of Slavonic Studies, who has checked

both my translation and my explanatory notes with meticulous and generous care. I am, of course, solely responsible for the views expressed in this introduction, and in my own notes.

My thanks are also due to the workers at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and the Conservative Research Department for kindly discovering the original English texts of a number of unpublished official documents which it seemed desirable to reproduce in their original form rather than to re-translate them into English from the Czech. The American Department of Information has rendered the same service in respect of certain documents appertaining to events which took place in the United States. Mention should also be made of my secretary, Mr. W. Krasser, who deciphered my often illegible handwriting with almost uncanny accuracy. Last but not least I wish to pay tribute to my wife who unfailingly supported our flagging energies by administering to our internal economy just when sustenance was needed.

Vienna, June, 1953 GODFREY LIAS

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CHAPTER I

THE GATHERING STORM

1. *How the Peace of 1919 was Gradually Lost*

AS early as 1921–22, only two or three years after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, when Germany had got over her defeat in 1918, there began in Europe a great and exciting drama: the fight for the revision of the Versailles Peace. It was one of the greatest and most dramatic struggles in the political history of Europe. It ended in a new tragedy, vast and destructive: the second World War.

This struggle first centred round reparations. It began soon after the fixing of the precise amount of German payments in May, 1921, and ended in a victory for Germany and the liquidation of its reparations debt at the Conference of Lausanne, which opened on July 2nd, 1923. There, German reparations were reduced from 132,000,000,000 to 3,000,000,000 marks, and while the conference was actually in progress, Reichs Chancellor Franz von Papen told his friends and acquaintances that Germany would not pay even a penny of that sum.

Next followed the disarmament clauses of the peace treaty. The struggle concerning these began in Geneva after the signing of the final protocols of the Locarno Treaties of October 16th, 1925,[1]* when it was decided to call a conference at which the manner and measure of general disarmament for all States were to be fixed. It ended on October 14th, 1933, also in Geneva, when Germany left the Disarmament Conference, and then, on March 16th, 1935, revived the Reich's Army. Finally, there came the revision of the territorial clauses of the Versailles Treaty in the years 1932–33 when, on Mussolini's initiative, the so-called Four-Power Pact was concluded (March 18th, 1933). The war against Abyssinia followed, paving the way for Hitler's annexation of Austria and for Munich. This revision culminated in the second World War.

The object of the struggle for the revision of the peace treaties was to bring about a complete change of the whole European situation. The Versailles Treaty had given predominance on the European Continent to Great Britain and France, their friends and smaller allies. The threefold attack on the treaty was for the purpose of abolishing this predominance on the Continent and to transfer it to the other side. As I have just said:

*See notes at the end of each chapter. (Tr.).

Territorial changes began to be discussed in earnest in the years 1932-33, in other words, at the moment when Hitler came into power in Germany, thus adding to the authoritarian regime which already existed in Central Europe—Mussolini's Fascist dictatorship—another and much more dangerous one: the German Nazi dictatorship.

On March 18th, 1933, Mussolini proposed to the British Premier, Ramsay MacDonald and to Sir John Simon, during their visit to Rome, the conclusion of the Four-Power Pact which, besides pushing the League of Nations into the background, provided for the *secret* establishment of a so-called European directorate of the Western and Central European Great Powers, with the Soviet Union excluded. The territorial revision of the peace treaties was expressly proposed. From diplomatic conversations at that time, it appeared that this revision was to affect especially the Little Entente States and Poland. France and Great Britain were to withdraw from their positions on the Continent to their colonial empires. In Central and Eastern Europe the Fascist powers, Germany and Italy, were to decide alone and effectively. The internal policy of both Fascist Powers was sharply anti-Socialist, as well as anti-Communist, so the Four-Power Pact was automatically not only revisionist, but also in its whole substance directed against the U.S.S.R.

The Four-Power Pact, as is well known, was actually signed in Rome on July 15th, 1933, but its ratification did not take place, not only because of the resistance of the Little Entente and Poland, but still more because of the indignation of democratic public opinion in France and England which felt instinctively that such an agreement could serve only to strengthen the two Fascist dictatorships and establish their supremacy on the European Continent.

Whatever our opinion about the course of this struggle for the revision of the peace treaties, in a certain sense it was a normal development. After every war the defeated party tries to wipe out its defeat, either by political and diplomatic means, or by a new war. This has ever been the law of history and of international politics and the process will be repeated, even after the second World War. It was more than usually certain that this would happen with a nation like the Germans. Indeed, from the very beginning they never made any secret about it, although official Germany continued to utter platitudes about the necessity of keeping peace and its desire for friendly co-operation with its former adversaries. Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925 and 1927, and the utterances of other nationalists and militarists were officially represented to Allied public opinion as the eccentricities of opponents of the 'moderate' German Government, which,

at the same time, however, used them to extort further concessions from the allies.

To everybody who knew Germany and the Germans and, indeed, to everybody who carefully watched Germany after 1920, it must have been clear that a long period of struggle over the peace treaties *was beginning* and that its result would be either a certain balance and final co-operation between victors and vanquished, or another great war. Czechoslovak policy never doubted this and had no illusions about it. The numerous declarations which I made as Minister for Foreign Affairs and as President, in Parliament and in other places, are clear proof of this, as were also my incessant efforts for peace and for the establishment of peace safeguards in Europe, and my unremitting aim of establishing the safety of the State which I pursued during all the twenty years of the First Republic.

If, therefore, we look back at Czechoslovak foreign policy between the two wars, we can, in my opinion, definitely state that it was not only animated by a full understanding of what was happening and what was going to happen, but also that it single-mindedly and consistently followed an undeviating course with perseverance and resolution. On the one side, we were always at work in the interest of peace—ready to co-operate with our adversaries, to come to terms with them in a friendly manner and, where it was necessary, to make such concessions as occasion demanded to the defeated, so that they could be reconciled with the new international order. On the other side, we made all efforts to build up guarantees of collective security, and to strengthen the League of Nations, but at the same time, we prepared for defence in case of a conflict.

That was the sense of our policy at Geneva, of our policy at Locarno. We made a number of concessions at the conferences on reparations, disarmament and economic co-operation. Such, too, was the aim of our conciliatory and moderate policy towards a democratic Germany in general. We never did, and never could, exclude the possibility of good neighbour relations with a really democratic and peace-loving Germany, if such a Germany should exist. At this point, I refer to the book of Dr. Kamil Krofta:* *From the period of our First Republic* (published in 1939 during the German occupation), which truthfully shows how we went to the extreme of concession to conciliate Weimar Germany.

We had, of course, to count with the second eventuality, too : *namely, that our and our allies' policy of conciliation would be unsuccessful.* We reckoned, that as long as reactionary Germany and its friends felt weak, they would

*Dr. Krofta was Dr. Beneš's successor as Foreign Minister when Dr. Beneš became President in succession to Professor Masaryk. (Tr.).

choose the road of gradual advance to new positions and of feigned co-operation. But there would come a time when there would have to be an end to concessions and the victors in the first World War would have to state clearly that this or that could not, and might not, be done. If Germany should ever consider the time to be ripe and herself to be nationally and militarily strong enough, it would adopt new methods: threats, violence and finally war. From the moment when the Fascist dictatorship in Italy joined the Nazi dictatorship in Germany, there could be no more doubt about this development.

Today, after the second World War, let us take heed. Exactly the same procedure—adapted to changed conditions—will be repeated again.

As proof that our pre-Munich policy thus correctly interpreted developments in Europe, I will quote here my declaration of October 31st, 1933, in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate, on the subject of foreign policy. Cautiously (as was necessary in an official statement) I outlined the meaning and aims of the Nazi revolution and the start of Hitler's Third Reich:

'Until the arrival of the present regime in Germany, fourteen years of post-war European policy have been taken up with the struggle to secure peace in Europe on the basis of the Paris Peace Treaties. During this period, it became clear to all, even in the camp of the former victorious powers, that it would not be possible to hold the defeated nations in a position of permanent inferiority, and that agreement between the two camps must be gradually prepared. The change must be brought about peacefully and the respective positions be adjusted so that, by a process of gradual compromise, a new peace organisation of Europe will finally be reached.

'*The German National-Socialist revolution has interrupted this gradual development.* In my opinion, the final aims and ideals of Stresemann's policy were, broadly speaking, not much different from the final aims of the policy of present-day Germany. The two differed only in their external manifestations and procedure and in the better understanding of the aims, efforts and needs of the rest of Europe, which exercised a passing influence on the tactics and methods of Stresemann's Germany.

'Ever since the unification of the German nation in modern times, especially after the revolution of 1848, German policy has had a Pan-German basis. The Reich of Kaiser Wilhelm followed this policy as well as present-day Germany. Europe must reckon with this as a fact and must prepare itself accordingly.

'*But present-day Germany considered the pace and methods of Stresemann's*

Germany for the realisation of German national aims, as too slow. It has therefore broken away from this line of development and begun to use more radical methods. The consequence is that nearly all European countries have *been taken by surprise by the sudden expansion of German national dynamism.* Some of them are also frightened by it. They have become aware of a change in German strength, which, seemingly, they expected to take place only later, and they have begun to draw political conclusions and arrange their policy and tactics accordingly.'

Germany's international aims and the whole European problem were fully understood in our country from *the moment of the arrival of Nazi Germany.* I was personally well aware of the inevitable alternatives—that the two sides would either definitely agree to a peaceful development in Europe, or would collide in a dreadful conflict. I wanted our State—just in the centre of the colliding interests : a new State, not yet firm enough in tradition and evolution, not yet fully known to the world—to be firmly anchored at the moment when there would be either an agreement or a conflict, to be prepared and to emerge successfully either from diplomatic negotiations, or even from a war.

For this reason, I tried—as far as was in our power—to keep the camp of the Allies of 1918 in being, that is to say, Great Britain, France and their Allies of the first World War—so that they could continue in unity and co-operation as long as possible. I also strove to maintain our alliance with France and the States of the Little Entente. I was convinced that a peaceful compromise would be possible only if Germany at the critical moment should see itself opposed by a coalition of States, and would not succeed in disturbing these alliances so as to be able to fight for its aims against each of us separately and with one after the other. This was also the *main reason* why I tried systematically from 1922 to 1938 and again during the second World War to secure co-operation and agreement between Western Europe and the Soviet Union.

When Nazi Germany left the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations in October, 1933, *I had to admit to myself that this was probably the end of the policy of seeking general agreement and that we in Europe were being driven almost irresistibly into a terrible conflict.* The representative of Germany on the Disarmament Conference, Ambassador Nadolny, frankly admitted this in reply to a direct question I put him at the time of his departure from Geneva in October, 1933. He added, that Hitler's decision to withdraw from Geneva was 'madness and the beginning of a terrible fresh tragedy and another dreadful disaster for Germany'.

The development of Nationalism and Nazism in Germany confirmed

this diagnosis. Its unconcealed expansionism, expansive pan-Germanism, the clear uncompromising declaration of war to the death against every shade of democracy: the deliberate utilisation of all Germans abroad as revolutionary organisations against the States in which they lived: the systematic propaganda for a Central European 'Lebensraum' and about the 'Herrenvolk': the bestial anti-semitism and 'primitivism' which distinguished Germany's so-called 'Führer', whose vulgarity made him the exact personification of the whole doctrine and of the new German regime —all these things made it clear to me that there were no more *two political camps*, defeated Germany and the victorious allies, but two fundamentally differing and irreconcilable worlds, the opinions, aims, ideals and legal conceptions of which were fundamentally opposed to one another. I was sure that in the end these two worlds would clash.

In addition, as I saw it, was the problem of the Soviet Union. On which side would it finally be ranged ? I never agreed with the policy of the Western democracies, which for so many years isolated the Soviet Union and excluded it from co-operation in Europe and in the world. It seemed to me that victory would go to the side to which the Soviet Union ultimately gave its support. I therefore tried systematically, and *before it was too late*, to incline it towards the ranks of the European democracies. For years I carried on this struggle both at home and abroad, and, as is well known, the fight was a hard one.

Professor Masaryk and I had categorically rejected already during the first World War, the policy of intervention against the Soviet Union. Our principle in post-war European policy was not to isolate the Soviet Union, but to try for co-operation and thus bring about an agreement between the U.S.S.R. and the rest of Europe. We did this partly because we always held that without the participation of the Soviet Union there would be neither balance nor real peace in Europe and the world and partly because we feared that the Western European policy of isolating the Soviet Union would push it, if perhaps only tactically and temporarily, into an agreement with Germany against the rest of Europe, which could have been extremely dangerous at that time for the whole future of Europe. And for us, for Czechoslovakia, this would have spelt mortal danger.

We entered into diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1922 at the Conference of Genoa and right up to 1938 we consistently did our utmost to maintain a policy of friendly co-operation, in spite of the strong opposition of our right-wing parties. From the moment the Soviet Union also recognised the dangerous possibilities of a supremacy of the Fascist dictatorships in Europe and changed its attitude, tactics and behaviour

towards theWestern democracies and the League of Nations, we also did our utmost to bring the Soviet Union and the Western Democracies into direct alliance with one another and with ourselves. Treaties of alliance between the Soviet Union and France, and between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia were in fact concluded in 1935. I wish to stress that neither during the first World War nor during the years up to 1938, nor up to the present day* were we ever animated by any ideological motives of *internal policy*.

Our conviction that an agreement with the Soviet Union *was essential, was always based exclusively on considerations of international policy* and the maintenance of peace in Europe as a whole.

We therefore considered it a great triumph of our peace policy and that of Europe, when the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations on September 18th, 1934, and together with France and ourselves began to carry out a consistent policy of collective security, finally concluding treaties of mutual aid with France and ourselves and non-aggression pacts with the other two members of the Little Entente and Poland. Personally, I knew conditions in the Soviet Union on the whole quite well. I knew that for some time the regime had been very strong and that the talk and propaganda about a possible internal revolution from whatever side were either naïve nonsense or exaggerated and deliberate propaganda; I knew also that its military strength was great, well organised and was still growing.†

Finally, I knew by 1935 that the two Five-Year Plans had essentially changed the economic structure of the Soviet Union, so that it had become one of the greatest industrial States in Europe. My journey to Russia between June 6th and 17th, 1935, fully confirmed this impression.

I want to stress especially that, having in view the possibility of an impending conflict with Germany, we tried with full sincerity and, at that time, with the full consent of all the parties in the government, to round off this aspect of Czechoslovak foreign policy in the years 1932–33 by an agreement with Poland. Today, it is already known that in September, 1932, at Geneva, I offered Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, a political agreement which was to pave the way for a military treaty. He promised to consider the matter and let me have his views in due course. When there was no answer, we repeated the offer in the Spring of 1933,

*These words were written in 1947. (Tr.).

†In 1937, the Soviet administration and army were purged of pro-German elements, thanks in part to the disclosure of their activities by Dr. Beneš—see Author's Note 8 (Chap. I), page 47. (Tr.).

after Hitler had been nominated Chancellor of the Reich, this time through the Polish Minister at Prague, W. Grzybowski. When even this produced no answer, I instructed our envoy in Warsaw, Dr. V. Girsa, to repeat the offer once more. Again there was no reply. *But on January 26th, 1934, the well-known—and fateful—Polish-German Treaty was signed in Berlin*, a step which substantially enabled Germany to make ready for the attacks launched in 1938–39. Marshal Pilsudski apparently realised that a policy of agreement with democratic Czechoslovakia was incompatible with the undemocratic and a-social tendencies of his semi-Fascist regime which was supported by the Polish aristocracy and reaction.

To these fundamental principles of our pre-war foreign policy, I should like to add that it was always governed by the principle of the indivisibility of European peace and by the ideal of collective security as expressed in the Covenant of the League of Nations to which we always remained faithful. We did so because we believed these principles to be ethically right and because we felt that they ought to become the whole basis of future international intercourse. Moreover, after the first World War the League of Nations was a really great political and moral force, which stood for the *peaceful* reconciliation of the interests of the Great Powers and mutual co-operation and maintenance of the balance of power.

If a policy of firmness and principle had been followed at that time, it would have been possible to have made the Geneva institution into a great instrument against all aggression. It would therefore have been a sin not to have used this instrument and not to have tried to build it up into a permanent and strong institution. That did not mean, of course, as many of my opponents at that time declared, that we believed *blindly* in the effectiveness of the League of Nations in all circumstances and that I was placing all my hopes on it. Our whole system of alliance proved that our attitude to the League was never uncritical.

Finally, I wish to explain that our policy of constructing the Little Entente was merely the expression of our conviction that in every future European crisis, semi-feudal Hungary, as it emerged from the first World War, would, for social and national reasons, automatically gravitate to the side of German imperialism and Prussian reaction and turn against its three smaller neighbours. Any attempt to establish some other combination, with Hungarian participation—like the attempts of reactionary Poland to reach an agreement with the Horthy regime—would, on our part, have been futile if not indeed ridiculous so long as Hungary did not change socially. And when Fascism took root in Italy and Nazism in Germany, a permanent alliance of the three reactionaries, the Italian, the

German and the Hungarian, was inevitable, though, for Hungary, this meant in the end a new and great catastrophe. In the circumstances then obtaining, the Little Entente, in the form we gave to it, was the natural and indeed the only possible alliance for the three States concerned. Any deviation from this alliance by a member meant that it was digging its own grave. *An essential pre-requisite for success was, of course, that social conditions in Yugoslavia and Rumania should gradually change*—at any rate, by degrees. I was always aware of the fact that if this did not happen, it would be such an inner weakness of the whole Little Entente that in the end it would disrupt the alliance.

I must emphasise that this concept of European international policy and the acceptance of systematic co-operation with the Soviet Union against aggression and reaction in Germany, necessarily involved Western Europe's understanding the need for some adaptation of its social policy to conditions in the Soviet Union, which had gone through a revolution, and conversely, that the Soviet Union as well should seriously think of a similar adaptation of Soviet political and revolutionary conditions to the concepts of *political* freedom in Western Europe. Failing this, it was essential that these systems should at least tolerate one another. For me this meant that Western Europe would be forced to evolve towards a visibly progressive and really democratic social and economic policy and that the Western European bourgeoisie would have to make considerable social and economic concessions to the workers and socialistically-minded people. It seemed to me that European, and indeed world, peace necessitated this and that it would be worth it.

It was from this standpoint also that I regarded Czechoslovakia's internal and foreign policy. I considered that my country must move in this direction gradually, step-by-step and by a process of evolution; that this was, and would be, quite simply one of the pre-requisites of international security and of the very existence of our State. I kept constantly before me the fact that the permanence of the Czechoslovak State was dependent on the existence of a democratic, progressive, socially mature and steadily developing Europe. In such a Europe, I thought, we will always maintain our freedom. In a reactionary Europe which supports Fascism and kills or squanders democracy, freedom and progress, we will always be in danger. It was in this sense that the words of Masaryk applied to us : The existence of States depends upon the ideas which gave them birth.

My policy was the systematic and consistent application of these principles—hence my never-ceasing struggle in internal policy. Actually, from the moment of my return from the Paris Peace Conference in September,

1919, I was always in some kind of opposition in internal policy. This was why the pre-Munich right-wing parties were always trying to get rid of me.

These then were the fundamental principles of our foreign policy after 1919–21 and especially in the period 1932–38, when Nazism came into power in Germany.

2. *The Events Which Led to Munich—Our Efforts to Save Ourselves*

(*a*) Hitler's first attempt to disorganise Europe— Hitler's Treaty with the Poland of Pilsudski

The acute international crisis out of which the real disintegration of post-war Europe sprang, started as early as 1931 with the renewal of the Sino-Japanese conflict which quickly came to Geneva. In Europe, the crisis first manifested itself in the deepening conflicts inside Germany and in the German elections of 1932 in which the Nazis gained such successes that Hitler was able to seize power in January, 1933. The far-reaching consequences of this event were soon felt throughout Europe, especially at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva, where they culminated—as I have already mentioned—in the departure of Germany from the Conference and, later, from the League of Nations. The conflict between Germany and the rest of Europe was now plainly visible and from that moment it was never out of the picture of European policy.

The Four-Power Pact, the direct precursor and model for the Munich agreement of 1938, not only did not lessen the European crisis, but made it even more acute and widespread than it had been before, especially when the Treaty itself inevitably fell through in the autumn of 1933 in consequence of the resistance of the Little Entente and Poland and especially because of the opposition of public opinion in France and Great Britain.[a]

Poland's ill-considered, arrogant mark of defiance, the German-Polish Treaty of January 26th, 1934, caused a further deterioration. The Poles started negotiations with Hitler in the autumn of 1933 as a Polish answer to the Four-Power Pact, which was peculiarly unfavourable, if not actually hostile, to Poland. The German-Polish Treaty was one of the fateful compacts and dire events which characterised this period. It increased the tension between France and Poland, caused fresh tension between ourselves and Poland and between the Soviet Union and Poland. In addition, it accelerated the already patent withdrawal of France from the whole of Central Europe. This, in turn, facilitated the establishment of those French cliques of Laval, Bonnet and Petain which were to lead to the negotiations

for an agreement with Hitler and so to Munich, the dreadful fall of Poland and finally to the capitulation of France itself in June, 1940.

When the Polish Minister, Mr. Grzybowski, came to me on January 28th, 1934, to announce the signing of the German-Polish Treaty, I said to him substantially:

> 'I consider the signing of your treaty with Germany to be a great blow to the present European policy. It means that you are helping Germany not merely to stop discussing disarmament, but to turn definitely to gradual rearmament. It means that you are leaving the Geneva Front and are enabling Germany to justify its anti-Geneva policy of expansion. This connection you have made with Germany in fact will have far-reaching consequences. The whole so-called French system of European security has been undermined and a common Eastern front against German aggression has been made impossible.'

Minister Grzybowski argued that the signing of the Four-Power Pact had forced Poland, in its turn, to seek its own security, and that France and Great Britain had to be taught that Poland could go its own way. To this I answered that it was a way which could only lead to the strengthening of Germany and its preparations directed against Poland and Czechoslovakia. Grzybowski replied that the Poles knew very well that Germany was preparing to attack them, but that the treaty would anyhow not last ten years and would perhaps induce France to take more account of Poland. It would also gain time for Poland itself to make better preparations for the conflict with Germany.

I replied that this calculation was based on false premises. I said that Germany, too, needed time for its preparations for its expensive, murderous undertakings and would be protected in these plans by the treaty with Poland. Seeing that Germany was twice as strong as Poland, it would gain correspondingly more from the respite, would be better able to prepare itself and would then go against us all.

Meanwhile, Mussolini continued his policy of expansion in the Balkans and Africa. In October, 1934, he was the chief backer of Pavelić in his preparations for the murder of King Alexander of Yugoslavia and at the same time he himself prepared his war against Abyssinia. After the death of Barthou when Laval became Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mussolini began to intrigue in Paris to get Laval's consent for the Abyssinian adventure. He succeeded. Hitler took advantage of the situation to make another important move in the extension of his power. In March, 1935, he deliberately violated Germany's disarmament obligations and changed over from

extensive but secret arming to the public declaration that he was rebuilding the German army.

It seemed as if this critical development would be halted when the Assembly of the League of Nations on October 7th and 10th, 1935, decided in favour of sanctions against the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. The initiative in this matter was taken by Great Britain, which, in spite of the systematic sabotage carried out by Laval, backed the Geneva institution with unaccustomed determination through the mouth of the Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare. I personally gave full support to the League of Nations and, as President of the Assembly of the League, I assisted Sir Samuel Hoare without reservation and substantially in his efforts to apply sanctions against the aggressor. I was therefore much criticised at home by our right-wing parties.

But this momentary resistance to the despots was soon compromised, partly because Laval refused to apply the sanctions consistently and partly because of his ultimate agreement with the very British Foreign Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, who had first obtained sanctions at Geneva and then, reversing his original standpoint with incredible haste, consented to the partition of Abyssinia between Mussolini and the Emperor of Abyssinia even before the war had ended. Though the resistance of public opinion in Great Britain to this unhappy agreement led to the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare on December 19th, 1945, chaos in Europe was increased by this incident and soon afterwards confusion became even worse confounded when, in July, 1936, the Spanish Fascist generals revolted against the Spanish Republic with the help of Hitler *and* Mussolini, to which the Western democratic States responded with unbelievable weakness.

The negotiations between the Great Powers about the Spanish Civil War in 1936 and 1937 (the revolt against republican Spain had broken out on July 18th, 1936) and especially the proceedings of the London Non-Intervention Committee, confirmed the impotence of the Western Powers to stop Fascist aggression against the Spanish Republic. Indeed, it was already clear that Fascism and Nazism held the political initiative and were in a position to disrupt the influence of the democracies on the Continent of Europe. All this happened in spite of the fact that from the time of the Spanish War, the Soviet Union began to intervene directly and more actively in the quarrels of the Western and Central European powers.

Meanwhile, on March 7th, 1936, Hitler, by occupying the left bank of the Rhine, struck *one of the last, decisive blows* against European peace. At that time, Czechoslovakia was ready to enter the conflict against Germany at the side of France, and according to all the signs, so also was Poland.

We told the French Minister in Prague clearly that we would follow France, in accordance with our treaty obligations, if she should draw the logical conclusion from Hitler's act. Hitler had violated the Treaty of Locarno with its so-called Rhine Pact which gave international authority to France and Great Britain in this specific case to go to war immediately.* The Western democracies could have stopped Germany and its criminal policy in time. In my opinion, Czechoslovakia was in duty bound to go with them and would have done so. But nothing happened.

Here, France committed the most fatal error the results of which were felt throughout Europe. It failed to act according to a treaty *which had been concluded for this very contingency, in full agreement with Germany, whose signature the Treaty actually bore.* The Western democracies acted on this occasion with inexplicable weakness, irresolution and the most frivolous lack of foresight. According to official British and French sources, the responsibility must be placed personally on the French Premier, M. P. E. Flandin. It is said that he was afraid of the social consequences of war in view of existing internal conditions in France and that at all the British-French-Belgian meetings in Paris and London at which the answer of the Powers to Hitler's occupation of the left bank of the Rhine was discussed, he therefore prevented resort to military measures against Germany in accordance with the Locarno Treaty. This fatal step on the part of French policy was the ultimate and *direct* cause of the decay and tragedy of France. From it, derived Munich and the French capitulation of June, 1940. In March, 1936, France deserted itself and it was so much the easier for it to desert *us* in September, 1938. Its own capitulation in 1940 and its consequent degradation were merely the direct consequence of its former error.

Hitler's speech on the occasion of the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, in which he declared that the other provisions of the Locarno Treaties remained in force and that Germany was ready to agree with all its neighbours on co-operation, non-aggression and mutual respect for frontiers, completed the process of political decomposition in Central Europe. Europe now knew for certain that France and Great Britain were not prepared to intervene energetically to prevent further violations of a treaty so important for them and for Europe as the so-called Rhine Pact signed at Locarno.

Beck's Poland hinted with cynical and malicious glee that it was now clear how right Poland had been to conclude its treaty with Germany in January, 1934. France (it was pointed out) was not even defending itself.

*Without waiting for League approval. (Tr.).

How then could Poland count on France defending Poland in accordance with their alliance. Now that Germany was once more a mighty lord in Europe, Poland had been able to come to terms in time, whereas these other States would find it difficult to secure its favour! Had Polish policy been right or wrong?

In Yugoslavia, too, the policy of turning away from France was much strengthened. Prince Paul and his Prime Minister, Stojadinović, soon felt able to make a direct approach to Berlin. We already sensed this unmistakably at the beginning of June, 1935, at the Conference of the Little Entente in Bucharest and on the occasion of my journey to Rumania.[4] Prince Paul clearly hinted that he was no longer counting much on Western Europe.

Rumanian policy was much shaken. The Bulgarian Fascists rejoiced and Austria soon realised what a successful German coup against the West could mean, because immediately afterwards the subversive activity of German Nazis inside Austria itself and just across the border of the Reich against Austria increased to such an extent that Chancellor Schuschnigg was forced willy-nilly to sign the well-known agreement with Hitler of July 11th, 1936.

This almost unopposed violation of Austrian independence was not only the first blow, but also a decisive one.[5] Inside Austria it made Nazism a legal movement. In the Reich it made possible the most impudent penetration by Nazism into internal Austrian affairs and led to the establishment of the first Quislings in Europe. To Hitler it gave an international cloak, under cover of which he could calmly prepare the internal nazification of Austria and thereby its bloodless annexation.

(*b*) Hitler's disruptive offers of an Agreement with Czechoslovakia

In this situation Hitler thought that the time was also already ripe for an attempt to win Czechoslovakia over. His plan had two aspects: one, international and the other, internal. In the international field he would offer us a similar treaty to his treaty with Poland. His object was to drive a wedge between us and France (and Western Europe in general): to compromise us in the eyes of the Soviet Union and to isolate us internationally, so that we should automatically fall into the orbit of his policy.

In interior policy, the plan was to repeat what he had done in Austria: that is, to induce us to accept an agreement by which Nazism was to be legalised in Czechoslovakia and to use the treaty as a cloak under which to penetrate the ranks of our Germans, break up their political organisations

and disrupt their active co-operation with the Czechoslovak Government and nazify them completely so that they would carry out Hitler's wishes in Czechoslovakia. Either he would use our nazified Germans simply to annex the so-called Sudeten regions at a suitable moment, or he would use those same treacherous elements to establish his direct or indirect rule over the whole Republic. The Germans would remain in the Republic, enter the Government in agreement with Berlin and gradually permeate the whole structure of the State.

In accordance with this plan, Count Trauttmannsdorff (then a high official of Hitler's Minister, Seldte) contacted our Berlin envoy in autumn, 1936, and told him that two of Hitler's trusted henchmen would like to go to Prague to talk with the President of the Republic* on the lines of Hitler's speech after the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, in which he stressed Germany's readiness to reach agreement with all her neighbours. They wished, he said, to ascertain whether such an agreement would be possible with Czechoslovakia. The discussions were to be carried out in an atmosphere of great secrecy. They would, he declared, be simply an exchange of views between the two heads, in which the Ministers for Foreign Affairs would not participate—in particular, Minister Neurath was to be kept in ignorance of the matter. Only after everything had been agreed would the Ministries for Foreign Affairs be asked to draft and conclude a formal agreement.

I answered that I would receive Hitler's representatives to hear their point of view and that I would answer their questions immediately.

On November 13th, 1936, they arrived in Prague. They were Count Trauttmannsdorff, formerly an Austrian aristocrat and Czechoslovak citizen (his brother had an estate in Czechoslovakia, in Horšův Tyn), and Dr. Haushofer, the son of the well-known Bavarian authority on international politics, Professor Haushofer, who was later executed by Hitler. They once more stated the object of their visit: Hitler would like to agree with me personally on a new policy of friendship between our two States, sign some kind of pact of non-aggression like that with Poland, and remove the barriers of mutual distrust which the past had raised between us. This, they said, would mean the recognition of Czechoslovakia's frontiers and a final agreement that the two States would not go to war with one another. Hitler, they went on, wished to negotiate this treaty with me alone and they added in his name a number of flattering compliments. Meanwhile, they were to request me to observe absolute secrecy both

*Dr. Beneš succeeded Professor Masaryk as President on December 18th, 1935 (Tr.).

internally and internationally. They asked for an immediate answer to the question whether the President of the Czechoslovak Republic was ready, in principle, to start such negotiations and whether he considered that a treaty of such a nature between Germany and Czechoslovakia was possible. They concluded by telling me that after taking back an answer to these fundamental questions, they would return to Prague with the relative instructions and proposals in order to start concrete negotiations.

I answered at once that I was not against negotiations of such a nature and that I would welcome an agreement between Germany and Czechoslovakia. However, I could express myself more concretely only after I knew in greater detail on what principles an agreement would be based. As to the proposed procedure, I observed that, though I did not refuse to discuss these matters myself if the Reich's Chancellor expressly desired it, I could not, as a constitutional President, do this without the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and that I should also have to inform the Prime Minister. I therefore asked the two negotiators not to leave Prague without visiting and informing the Foreign Minister, Dr. Krofta. For the rest, they could of course rely on the matter remaining absolutely secret while it was in the phase of diplomatic discussions. On the following day they visited Minister Krofta and informed him of the substance of the discussions. Then they returned to Berlin.

At the beginning of December, 1936, Hitler's two negotiators asked our Minister in Berlin to arrange another visit to Prague. I received them at the Presidential Castle in Prague on Friday, December 18th, 1936. The discussions were very thorough and, on my side, absolutely frank. Our talk lasted nearly seven hours and by the time it ended I was already in no doubt about what Hitler really wanted.

Trauttmannsdorff and Haushofer placed before me Hitler's proposal that Germany and Czechoslovakia should sign a declaration or treaty, similar to the Polish-German Treaty of January 26th, 1934 (or an analogous treaty of non-aggression) which would put the relations between our two countries on quite a new basis, namely, that Czechoslovakia and Germany should in no circumstances go to war with one another.[6] It would also mean, they said, German recognition of the existing Czechoslovak frontiers. Though in the Reich and with Hitler himself there was much interest in the Czech Germans, the Führer, they intimated, considered an agreement to be possible in this question too. So far as Germany was concerned, it was only a question of the Germans in Czechoslovakia having some 'cultural autonomy' so that they could freely profess and cultivate their German nationality. If this were granted, Germany would

not be interested in supporting the efforts of our German politicians to gain territorial autonomy.

In essence, therefore, what Hitler wanted was, from the international standpoint, a treaty similar to that with Poland which would weaken our treaties of alliance with France and the Soviet Union and our obligations to the League of Nations (as in the case of the Polish Treaty) and from the internal standpoint, some such declaration as he had signed with Austria on July 11th, 1936, which would enable him to penetrate and corrupt our German citizens (as in Austria) and to infiltrate Nazi doctrines into them from the Reich—with all that this process entailed.

I answered first the point about our Germans. I said I could not negotiate about this question with any foreign agents. It was a purely internal Czechoslovak question. This was the line I had taken with Stresemann at Locarno in October, 1925: I could discuss in a friendly way with delegates of a foreign power any internal Czechoslovak question, including our German question, with Reich Germans. *But I could not negotiate about it with them* nor accept in such a matter any official obligations whatsoever. From this standpoint, I was ready, if they wished, to tell them how I regarded the problem of our Germans and to explain our policy and future plans. But no more.

At the request of Hitler's two emissaries, I then explained the whole problem in detail: how we saw it and how we wanted to solve it; what our Germans had got already, what in my opinion they were still to get, in what way their rights had perhaps not been honoured yet and in what they —and also their friends in Germany—were wronging us. I spoke clearly, openly, without mental reservations and without regard to diplomatic forms.

To their question (which voiced the views of the Henlein party) whether the whole Czechoslovak nationality policy did not aim at enabling the Czechs to seep into and penetrate the German frontier regions in Czechoslovakia, to permeate them and so gradually to contract the German areas, I answered that the process certainly did exist, but that it involved a special sociological problem. It was the result of the general political and economic development of Czechoslovakia. The movement of the Czechs in this direction was an irresistible urge deeply rooted in the historical and economic background of the last two centuries and must be accepted as a fact. The so-called Czechisation of our German territories was an automatic and natural exchange and mingling of the German and Czech population, the exact converse of the process had gone on in former centuries in the opposite direction when Germans had displaced Czechs,

often by violent means. It was an irresistible process, which, in these modern days could be seen wherever a nationally mixed territory was being industrialised on the edge of a less highly developed agricultural area. Already under Austrian rule, this process had developed swiftly. Our own German territory had been industrialised with the help of the Austrian government and bourgeoisie and the new industries had necessarily been manned by elements from the neighbouring Czech agricultural regions. *What was happening therefore was no deliberate policy initiated by an independent Czechoslovakia.* It was a natural modern sociological process and nothing could be done about it.

But the Czechoslovak Government, I assured them, was not planning a violent Czechisation of our German regions. In any case, no substantial change of the ethnical frontier could be expected in view of the maturity of both races. Any shifting of the frontier between the Czech and German elements in Bohemia and Moravia could only be brought about by force, by war. I went on: 'But we do not want a war. Nevertheless our Germans and also you in the Third Reich are well aware that our national frontier would automatically and necessarily shift somewhat more to the Northward if it should come to a new war and we should win. If, on the other hand, you were the victors, we know equally well *that you wish to take as much of our territory as possible and drive all Czechs out of our so-called German regions.* We are aware of that and we are preparing for it'. I spoke with such frankness that they seemed somewhat surprised.

With regard to the non-aggression treaty with Germany, I explained that the German proposal would necessarily involve Czechoslovakia's denouncing her treaties with France and the Soviet Union and leaving the League of Nations. But the Czechoslovak Government was resolved to honour its obligations in every case. No other course was open to it. Hitler's emissaries at once answered with an ironical smile, that 'signing a treaty with Germany certainly meant no such thing'. Poland had not acted in this manner. All that Germany would require was 'that Czechoslovakia, in case of a war between Germany and the States in question, would simply not put those treaties into operation'.

I was astonished at their explanation and still more so at their shameless cynicism in proposing a deliberate and premeditated violation of signed treaties.

After a short discussion in which I stated that in these circumstances an agreement would not be possible, the two negotiators asked me whether with my long experience at Geneva in formulating agreements and declarations of various kinds, I could not make some proposal of my own. I at

once replied that it would be better to place an agreement between Czechoslovakia and Germany on a basis which did not affect our existing commitments and so would be lasting. A new agreement should, in my opinion, be based on the existing German-Czechoslovak treaty of arbitration signed at Locarno on October 16th, 1925, which the Government of the Reich had officially declared to be still in force, first, on March 7th, 1936 (after the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine) and twice again later. We would accept such a treaty which would broaden the agreement of Locarno and would rule out war between Czechoslovakia and the German Reich on the understanding that all disputes would be settled in accordance with the Locarno treaty of arbitration. I offered to prepare the text of this new treaty and send it to Berlin.

Both delegates accepted this proposal[7] and at my request they again spoke to Dr. Krofta, to whom they expressed their satisfaction about our discussions. But they never returned to Prague and did not even answer my proposal when it was sent to Berlin. The rupture of the whole negotiations was later explained by Berlin as having been due to an 'indiscretion' by Czechoslovakia. It was declared that the matter had come to Neurath's ears and that he opposed an agreement with Czechoslovakia. This 'indiscretion' was, as a matter of fact committed by the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, Dr. Milan Hodža, in a talk with the Yugoslav envoy. But according to another version, when Trauttmannsdorff accidentally met the Austrian Minister, Marek, in Prague, he dropped a hint about the matter to him; Marek transmitted it to Vienna and from Vienna it went to Berlin and so to Neurath.

But the real truth was that my concept of the treaty was not at all acceptable to the rulers of the Third Reich. It did not change the political orientation of Czechoslovakia, it did not cancel or compromise our alliances with France and the Soviet Union and it did not change our view of the principle of the indivisibility of peace or of European collective security. Nor did it offer fresh possibilities for the legal penetration of German Nazism into our country. On the contrary, it was intended to emphasise the necessity of not interfering with our democratic way of life and to prevent the very thing that Hitler's offer was designed to bring about.

To sign such a treaty with Czechoslovakia would not have suited Hitler, the radicals of the Nazi party in the Reich or of those in Czechoslovakia. They therefore considered the negotiations to have failed.

I received unofficial confirmation of this from Berlin in the second half of January, 1937, together with a very confidential hint that Hitler was

now engaged in other negotiations, which, if successful, would probably also affect us considerably,[8] and that the resumption of our talks must therefore be postponed till later. We at once gave our allies a brief account of these negotiations and how they had ended. But in the spring of 1937, Goebbels began a systematic and continuous campaign of hatred and revenge against Czechoslovakia, thus showing that Berlin, having failed to persuade us to accept its proposed agreement, had embarked on different tactics: agitation, terror and deliberately prepared violence. No definitive reply ever came from Berlin, either then or later.

I consider this interesting episode of the time when we were next-door neighbours of Nazism to be extremely characteristic, not only of Hitler and his regime, but also of the whole period of deliberate 'appeasement' by the Western Powers at the expense of their friends at the very moment that Hitler was preparing for war against them and planning the destruction of his weaker neighbours one by one. But I wish to stress again that I had correctly gauged Hitler's plans by which he was preparing 'Munich'[9] and that we remained unflinchingly faithful to our policy even when the other countries of Central Europe succumbed one after the other to the fear evoked by the increasing vehemence of German Nazism.

(*c*) Disruptive Nazi and Fascist Policy is Successful in Poland and Yugoslavia— Our Reply

By the end of 1947, the Spanish Republic had fallen, internal dissensions in France had multiplied after the fall of the Popular Front and the international impotence of France and of Great Britain was now established. The Sino-Japanese war had been renewed in a new and most bitter form in the summer of 1937 (July 8th) and new quarrels had resulted at Geneva. In Central Europe, Hitler's Germany had been pursuing its systematic tactics of disruption since the end of 1936, concentrating especially on compassing the internal dissolution of Schuschnigg's Austria. The Hungarian Prime Minister had paid official visits to Warsaw and Berlin where there were open talks about plans for the disruption of Central Europe and especially about the partition of Czechoslovakia. Gömbös—whose visit to Warsaw was on October 21st, 1934—boasted mockingly of this in the lobbies of the Hungarian Parliament after his return from Warsaw, quoting cynical remarks by Pilsudski and Beck about Czechoslovakia. Meanwhile, Prince Paul and his Prime Minister Stojadinović, had been negotiating with Mussolini and Hitler from the end of 1936 until January, 1938, when

decisive steps were finally taken to lead Yugoslavia into the camp of the Fascist Powers. Finally, the systematic campaign which Goebbels had been conducting against Prague since the beginning of 1937 was being actively and maliciously aided and abetted by Beck's Poland and Horthy's Hungary.

Thus, the Fascist Great Powers were already advancing, the Western democracies were in full retreat and the whole continent of Europe was in a state of gradual dissolution. Spain, France, Poland, Austria, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria and Greece were all to a greater or less degree infected internally by the Fascist plague.

By the spring of 1938, disruption had gone sufficiently far to enable Hitler, on March 12th, to invade Austria (undermined as it was by the Nazis) and incorporate it in the Third Reich without provoking anything more than a few platonic protests. These had not even ended when, in May, preparations began for the planned attack on Czechoslovakia.* To this we answered, as is well known, by our mobilisation of May 21st, 1938.[10] Thereupon began a new critical period which was to decide the fate of Europe and of the world—perhaps for a long time.

Czechoslovak foreign policy had been watching all these developments with growing apprehension and uneasiness. I was afraid of this process of dissolution and asked myself where it would lead and how it would end. Right up to the signing of the Munich Treaty by the Great Powers I did not personally abandon my obstinate hope which buoyed me up in my consistent resistance to Nazism that the day-to-day deterioration of the situation would, in spite of all appearances, be arrested by timely and determined action and that a new European war could still be avoided. I therefore did everything in our power, as was but our duty, to avert this catastrophe.

Already, in 1931, we had called the attention of the members of the League of Nations in Geneva to the necessity of real courage to stop the expansion of Japan before it was too late, pointing out that otherwise the Geneva institution would receive a grave, perhaps a mortal, blow. In 1932, watching the development in Germany, I warned the Italian representative at Geneva, Baron Aloisi, that Italy should change its policy and not support Hitler's advent to power, or else the avalanche could not be stopped by anybody in Europe and would bring Central Europe, to say nothing of Italy itself, into ruin. At the same session of the League of

*At the time of the Anschluss with Austria, it had been officially announced that Germany had no more territorial demands to make in Europe. (Tr.).

Nations, as I have already stated, I had a long, private and earnest conversation with the Polish Foreign Minister Beck, who attended for the first time, and in the course of this I proposed a complete revision of our relations, including an agreement for the neutralisation of our common frontier and the preparation of future military co-operation, in order to present a common front against coming events from Germany.*

At the same time I had a talk with Chancellor Brüning at Geneva. He warned me that the Allies must make fresh concessions and give full Great-Power status to Germany or else Hitler would come into power. I declared, apparently to his great surprise, that under the circumstances then obtaining in Germany I was reckoning on Hitler's coming into power in any case. I explained to him, and subsequently to Minister Curtius, why this was bound to happen.

Before that, however, in July, 1932, when I returned to Prague from the Disarmament Conference at Geneva where I had the function of general Rapporteur and could therefore penetrate into the minds of the different delegations of the Great Powers, I immediately assembled the whole Czechoslovak General Staff[11] in the presence of the Minister for National Defense, Bradáč, and made a statement to the following effect: ' . . . In spite of all our efforts for the success of the Disarmament Conference at Geneva, everything I have already seen and heard there inclines me to the second eventuality† and *I am obliged to call your attention to this fact.* If the Conference fails—and it very probably will—a dreadful crisis is inevitable. First it will be political and then, immediately afterwards, there will be the danger of war. *I give you four years. The crisis will probably come in 1936 or 1937. By that time the Republic must be fully prepared militarily.*'

After the end of the session of the Assembly of the League of Nations in October, 1932, I received highly confidential information at Geneva that at the 'Volta' Conference which was held in Rome at the same time, Hitler's delegates and Mussolini had agreed on large-scale preparations for the so-called revision of the peace treaties. In reality this was the first move to bring about the destruction of the smaller Central European States and the first step towards the Four-Power Pact. I therefore went straight to Belgrade from Geneva to warn King Alexander of this plot. I explained my fears about the future of Europe and stressed the Italian and German danger. We agreed as a counter-move on even closer co-operation between our two States and a more energetic policy by the Little Entente. In agreement with him, I accordingly proposed in January, 1933, the so-called

*i.e. the advance of Hitlerism. (Tr.).

†i.e. that the Conference would fail. (Tr.).

Organisational Pact of the Little Entente to unite and range us even more closely against the impending action of Rome and Berlin.

When I got back to Prague, I quickly prepared the text of this treaty and sent it to King Alexander at Belgrade as well as to Foreign Minister Titulescu at Bucharest. It was signed on March 16th, 1933, at Geneva, just at the very moment when Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Simon were leaving Geneva for Rome to receive from Mussolini the draft Four-Power Pact, which Berlin and Rome intended to be the instrument for a complete change in the balance of power in Europe and which was particularly directed against the smaller Central European States.

In the autumn of 1933, after strenuous negotiations with the French Foreign Minister, Paul-Boncour, we succeeded in rendering the Four-Power Pact harmless, but the process of Europe's dissolution was not halted.[12] In October, 1933, Germany left the League. Soon afterwards, Hitler for the first time turned to Prague and through various intermediaries sounded us out on the subject of securing a bilateral treaty of non-aggression with Germany. When he discovered after inquiry through a third party that we had flatly rejected his overtures and had loyally informed Paris, London, Warsaw, Belgrade and Bucharest, Hitler turned to Warsaw, where he was more successful.

In mid-January, 1934, when I returned once more to Geneva and met Colonel Beck there on January 20th, I asked him—as I had reliable reports from Moscow of negotiations between Berlin and Warsaw—whether it was true that Poland was negotiating a bilateral treaty with Germany. I had also instructed our Minister in Berlin, Mastný, to find out the facts from the Polish Ambassador in Berlin, Lipski. I actually had in my pocket a telegram containing quite precise details about the whole negotiations. But Beck told me to my face that they were not true.

A few days later, on January 26th, the well-known Polish-German treaty between Hitler and Pilsudski was signed. Soon afterwards a campaign against us began in the Polish press. It was so violent that the German Minister in Prague, Dr. Koch, considered it necessary to come to me personally and assure me that Germany had nothing to do with it and that nothing of the kind had been agreed upon when the German-Polish treaty was concluded.

We in Prague defended ourselves against the approaching catastrophe as best we could. One means to this end was to establish co-operation with the Soviet Union and its direct participation in European and League affairs. Ever since 1927, when Commissar M. Litvinov came to Geneva for the first time to take part in the session of the Preparatory Committee

for Disarmament, I had never ceased to try to establish friendly and permanent contact with him and his colleagues and to work with them towards a general exchange of views which would lead to a rapprochement. I emphasised the main principles of our policy, the first and most important being that Czechoslovakia was convinced that without the participation of the Soviet Union in European, and particularly, Central European affairs, Germany would again be supreme in Europe and would endanger European peace. After the establishment of the League Committee for the Liquidation of the Sino-Japanese conflict in the years 1931 and 1932 and after the convocation of the Disarmament Conference we continued these talks as well as our co-operation with the Soviet Union. My endeavours at that time to persuade the Soviet Union to take an active part in the League were chiefly supported by France. Into this period falls first the journey of Herriot to Moscow and then Paul-Boncour's plans for direct negotiations with Moscow.

It seems that the Four-Power Pact was the deciding factor in finally making Moscow begin negotiations to enter the League of Nations which the Soviet Union ultimately did on September 18th, 1934. At that time, as President of the League Council, I was able, in co-operation with Barthou and Eden, to give material assistance towards the successful solution of the difficult problem of obtaining immediately a permanent seat in the Council of the League of Nations for Moscow, thus assuring the entry of the Soviet Union into the League.*

With the support of the Soviet Union, systematic work to secure peace against the plans of the Fascist Powers at once began at Geneva. Barthou and Litvinov—with my co-operation—drafted the well-known 'Eastern Pact' for mutual aid against an aggressor in Central and Eastern Europe which was to be signed by France, Germany, the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia. One of the objects of this pact was to make impossible what later actually happened when Poland turned against us and the Soviet Union while the Munich Agreement was in preparation. The 'Eastern Pact' was never signed because of the united resistance of Hitler's Germany and Beck's Poland. All that remained was the Franco-Soviet Agreement of May 2nd, 1935, and the Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement (signed at Prague on May 16th, 1935), which was ratified in June, 1935, during my first journey to Moscow.

Nevertheless, I considered the entrance of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations in September, 1934, to be a triumph of the policy of

*The chief problem was to circumvent the efforts of less qualified States to obtain the same status as the U.S.S.R. (Tr.).

peace and the signing of the French and Czechoslovak treaties with the Soviet Union to be the beginning of a new French and Czechoslovak policy which would link the Soviet Union with Western Europe and establish direct co-operation between East and West. *This I held to be quite indispensable if the expansion of Hitler's Germany to the East and thus also to the West was to be stopped.*

But the assassination of King Alexander on October 9th, 1934, which also caused the death of Barthou, again threw Europe into great confusion. This event was followed by a fatal and irremediable change in the internal and foreign policy of France, as well as of Yugoslavia. And though for some time Barthou's successor, Laval, seemed to continue the policy of co-operation with the Soviet Union, he soon began to embark upon a two-faced policy, also approaching at the same time Mussolini and indirectly Hitler. His grandiose intrigues and gambles eventually culminated in the disastrous capitulation of France in June, 1940, and the treasonable adventures of Petain and Laval in the years 1940–44.

After Christmas, 1934, Laval went to Rome where he negotiated with Mussolini about a new policy in Central Europe. He hinted that he would have no objection if Italy should transfer her expansion from Europe to Abyssinia. He did go to Moscow in May, 1935, to sign the treaty with the Soviet Union—an inheritance of the policy of Barthou—but he interrupted his journey in Berlin, where he hinted that the treaty should not be taken seriously:[13] Laval's object in concluding the Treaty was simply to use it as a means of pressure to enable him to come more easily to an agreement with Hitler. *Broadly speaking, the death of Barthou and the coming to office of Laval must be considered as the final collapse of the post-war policy of France.* At that moment France placed itself on a slippery slope and took all Europe with it. In spite of the energetic and well-meant attempt of the Blum government to arrest its decline, France was now sliding irresistibly and unmistakably down towards its capitulation in 1940.

(*d*) The Sanctions against Italy—The last Attempt of the Western Democracies to resist

We tried desperately but in vain to stop this general deterioration and the violent Fascist aggression by taking strong action at Geneva in September, 1935, against Italy's attack on Abyssinia and by imposing sanctions. So far as Great Britain was concerned, it was the last attempt to resist the violence of the Fascist Powers. As I have already mentioned, Sir Samuel

Hoare[14] placed Great Britain more resolutely behind the League of Nations than that country had ever been before.

But it was a swan song. A few months afterwards, Sir Samuel Hoare agreed with Laval about the partition of Abyssinia and therewith about the liquidation of sanctions. *Thus he began in the true sense of the word the subsequently notorious and fatal policy of so-called 'appeasement'*. First there came appeasement in the case of Abyssinia, then appeasement in the matter of the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, then a continuation of appeasement in the matter of China, then appeasement in the Spanish Revolution, appeasement about Austria, and finally 'appeasement' in regard to Czechoslovakia leading to the agreement of the Great Powers at Munich.

Great Britain was the last country which openly submitted to this decadent process. Eden, who took over the Foreign Office after the forced departure of Hoare, at first resisted this development with all his strength. But when Neville Chamberlain came to power on May 28th, 1937, after the resignation of Baldwin, differences between him and Eden soon arose over Chamberlain's readiness to compromise with regard to new provocations by Fascist Italy, and Eden resigned on February 20th, 1938. The development of 'appeasement' as the official policy was then completed in Great Britain, too, and in a manner which was catastrophic for Europe and the world.

To this very cursory outline of the condition of the democratic Great Powers at the beginning of 1938 I wish to add the following:

The state of Great Britain's armaments and its war preparedness generally in the summer of 1938 was—apart from its permanent and considerable fleet—quite inadequate. Successive British governments had, it seemed, no right concept of what was really being prepared in Europe. They culpably neglected proper preparations for the Army and the Air Force. The plan for rearming the country, which was accepted in 1937 after the final failure of all the attempts Great Britain had made to come to an agreement with Germany about armaments, was hardly even in a preparatory stage in 1938. It is true that the production of weapons was beginning to accelerate but mass production had not yet begun. In comparison with other countries, its force was very weak, the number of anti-aircraft weapons was inconsiderable and air-raid precautions were in their infancy. Germany had very precise information about British unpreparedness and in September, 1938, during the Czechoslovak crisis Göring ironically gave the British Ambassador in Berlin 'fairly accurate details of the British Air Force and of the British A.R.P.'[15]

In so far as its army was concerned, France was better equipped than Great Britain, but in 1938 she also was quite unprepared for sudden war, especially a modern one. Its preparations could not compare with Czechoslovakia's. This is surely strange seeing that France was informed of our arrangements down to the minutest detail by General Faucher, the head of the French military mission in Prague, who every week attended the military conferences with the President of the Republic, and not only knew exactly what we were doing, but *why we did it*. Be that as it may, France was far from being up to date in the number and production of tanks; and had an inadequate air force and an entirely insufficient output of planes and air-raid defence weapons. On these matters, also, Germany was well informed.

The fact is that the state of armaments and war preparedness, that is to say, the total effective forces of the Western democracies at the beginning of 1938, *corresponded accurately to their internal moral and political condition and the general decline of their prestige as Great Powers.* On the other hand, the military preparations of Nazi Germany had been pressed on feverishly, systematically and in all departments *since the spring of 1935*, when from secret rearming its rulers had changed to open arming, and were rebuilding the old imperial army in its full strength and power.[16] In the autumn of 1938, Germany as a whole was incomparably better and more solidly prepared for war than both the Western Powers together.

3. *Our struggle to save ourselves in the last Three Years before Munich*

(*a*) Preparedness of our Army

After the failure of sanctions and the fatal Anglo-French acquiescence in the German occupation of the left bank of the Rhine there remained, it is true, our alliance with France, the treaty of the Little Entente, our alliance with the Soviet Union and the League of Nations. *But for the first time since the World War we were faced with the concrete, menacing question: In the moment of crisis, which of these treaties and guarantees could we really rely upon in this general and catastrophic decline of European democratic values and of the democratic Great Powers ?*

From 1937 onwards theories were disseminated in France and legal theses written (by Professor Barthelemy in *Le Temps*) according to which the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty of Alliance had ceased to be valid because the Treaty of Locarno had become a dead letter.

The French Government, of course, never accepted this theory, because this would have involved releasing Great Britain from her obligations to

France. But the theory made a successful starting point for reactionary French circles in the development of their policy. The League of Nations received a blow which was nearly mortal when sanctions against Italy were abandoned on July 15th, 1936. And from that summer, the Little Entente also began to disintegrate—first Yugoslavia and then Rumania began to follow the same path.

I was, on the whole, well aware of the general situation in Europe at this period when President Masaryk resigned and when I was elected his successor after a certain internal crisis.* It was clear to me that in accepting this high office, I was going into very stormy seas and that we would have to reckon with this fact in framing our future policy. In every direction I looked, I could sense that Europe was plunging towards a great conflict and that we especially would not escape as the spark that caused the ultimate explosion would surely come from Germany. I therefore decided in the first place to redouble our efforts to bring our army to a high pitch of perfection. To this task I dedicated myself with greater energy and devotion than to anything else before.

My first and principal reform was to establish a Supreme Council for the Defence of the State, consisting of the chief ministers and representatives of the various parties in the Government. We improved the organisation of the Ministry of National Defence; we delimited the competence of the General Inspector of the army and of the Chief of the General Staff more clearly; we established inspectorates for the various weapons, especially the air force, and we defined the rôles of the various district commands and the corps commands, even nominating the commanders in case of war.

Under my chairmanship, the Supreme Council for the Defence of the State took all necessary measures in regard to the permanent frontier fortifications and the financing of that great, and in every respect successful, enterprise which was at least as efficient as the Maginot Line and in some respects surpassed it. For three whole years I had regularly and systematically discussed and settled with our military experts the more important questions concerning the readiness of our army, in my capacity as Supreme Commander of the armed forces of the Republic. The law for the defence of the State and other necessary legislation were prepared; the Officers'

*President Masaryk resigned on December 9th, 1935, and Dr. Beneš was elected as his successor on December 18th, 1935, by 340 votes out of 440. The 'inner crisis' was due to difficulties raised by the right-wing parties in the Coalition Government which were dissatisfied with Dr. Beneš's foreign policy and his socialistic tendencies. In the actual voting, there were 20 votes for Professor Nemec and 76 blank papers, most, if not all, of which came from the Henlein Party. Four persons were absent (Tr.).

Corps of the army was strengthened and fully equipped; we provided the army with weapons of all kinds and motorised it in so far as it was possible in our country at that time; we established armoured units and developed our air force on an adequate scale.

At that time we were also supplying the armies of our two allies in the Little Entente. We delivered war material and equipment on credit to Yugoslavia and Rumania to the value of thousands of millions of crowns and began to fit out their armies systematically.

It is a fact that in the late summer of 1938, our army, *in spite of all its deficiencies, which I did not conceal from myself, was at the time of the Munich discussions*, one of the best in Europe and that it was fighting fit in its morale as well as in its equipment—as our two mobilisations, in May and in September, demonstrated. Our officers' corps was in no way inferior in technical ability. Nor did the lessons of the second World War in the fields of military science and practice necessitate any material alteration in our military organisation, training and theory.

I was always proud of the fact that in these three years the Czechoslovak Republic did more in this direction than any other democratic State in Europe and that when we mobilised in September, 1938, the Republic was properly prepared for war—with two exceptions—one of these was in the sphere of civil air-raid defence where we could not surmount all difficulties including the petty quarrels of the two ministries concerned. The other was the unfinished state of the fortifications on our Southern frontier with Austria. I have sometimes been told that all these costly preparations were futile and that we could not use them at the time of Munich. Even if that were so, what would have been said to us all and to me personally both at home and abroad, if we had been as unprepared in 1938, as for example France and Great Britain? In any case, our fighting spirit, which up to that time had not been sufficiently cultivated, was increased and strengthened during those three years to meet the situation which developed in Europe. This was of great value to us during the second World War and still is today, especially with regard to our officers!*

(*b*) My Journeys to Rumania, Yugoslavia and France

My second task was to strengthen and to save what could be saved of our alliances in the growing disintegration of Europe. I made preparations

*Since the communist *coup d'etat* in February, 1948, practically all the army officers to whom President Beneš was referring have either been retired or imprisoned. Many have been hanged. Some have escaped this fate only by fleeing abroad (Tr.).

for three official journeys in my capacity as President of the Republic: to Rumania, Yugoslavia and France. I went to Rumania on the occasion of the Conference of the Little Entente, held on June 6th and 7th, 1936. I was surprised to see that a rift was already clearly visible in the Little Entente's ranks. The Yugoslav Regent, Prince Paul, opposing the Rumanian Foreign Minister, Titulescu, as well as the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Dr. Krofta, and myself, rejected every proposal which in our opinion could strengthen the Little Entente community with regard to the approaching crisis. Prince Paul excused his attitude by referring to the uncertainty which existed about France and Great Britain. He passionately recounted to me various slanders against Titulescu and attacked our Minister in Belgrade, Dr. Girsa, of whom he said that he was too much given to listening to the views of the Yugoslav opposition.

Still more serious was Yugoslavia's open refusal of closer co-operation in face of the disruption of Europe brought about by Germany. This occurred when the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Milan Stojadinović, came to see me on September 12th, 1937, in Topolčianky and Bratislava, where one of the regular sessions of the Little Entente was being held. *In agreement with Paris, I proposed to the other two members of the Little Entente that our separate treaties of alliance should be consolidated into one single treaty, operative in respect of all States* and that this should be followed by the conclusion of a treaty of alliance between the Little Entente as a whole and France.* Stojadinović began by talking about other matters, went on to make excuses and ended by simply rejecting the proposal. The Rumanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Antonescu, who was in Topolčianky at the same time told me that Rumania would accept the proposal if Yugoslavia did so too. I have no documentary proof that he already knew what Stojadinović's views were, but I think he did, because I had previously instructed Dr. Krofta to communicate the plan in writing to both the other members of the Little Entente before the meeting and Antonescu had been able to talk to Stojadinovič (who had come to the meeting in Slovakia via Bucharest) and therefore must have known that his condition would ruin my whole plan.

The game Prince Paul was playing was indeed already perfectly clear in the summer of 1937. He wanted to join the Berlin-Rome Axis against the axis of France of the Popular Front and the Soviet Union. This policy took a more or less official aspect when it became known that he was paying frequent visits to Germany, that he was in contact with Berlin through his brother-in-law, the Bavarian Count Toerring-Jettenbach and *that he was*

*The Little Entente was only operative against Hungary (Tr.).

(*secretly, for the time being*) *negotiating with Mussolini*. The opposition inside Yugoslavia was openly criticising these activities and Prague and Bucharest received confidential information on the subject. In the end, it was expressly confirmed to me personally by the Yugoslav Minister in Prague. The Yugoslav Minister in Paris, Murić, spoke quite cynically about the matter.

When I was certain that the secret negotiations of Prince Paul and Dr. Stojadinović with Mussolini threatened to disrupt the Little Entente and complete the disruption of Central Europe I decided to try to stop this development by paying an official visit to Belgrade and making a personal intervention. Prince Paul and Mussolini, fearing that my journey would hinder their secretly prepared agreement, deliberately postponed my visit and speeded up the signature of their treaty. Only after it had been concluded and signed on March 25th, 1937 (it was ratified with unusual speed as early as March 27th), did I get a hesitating and rather bashful invitation to visit the brotherly Yugoslav Nation. Perhaps it was expected that the coolness of the invitation would deter me from my journey. But world peace was at stake and I therefore went to Belgrade without hesitation for the official visit which was fixed for April 5th to 7th.

I was received with rejoicing by the Yugoslav people, but the Yugoslav dictators and those soldiers who had been so enthusiastic about the Little Entente before were both curt and embarrassed. During the talks, I was confirmed in my opinion that the leaders and official Belgrade were already whole-heartedly on the other side. They told me—Stojadinović in particular read me a long lecture on the subject on the second day of my visit—that if there should be a new war between the Great Powers, Yugoslavia would not be able to take part in it and would remain neutral under all circumstances. I asked if they could seriously believe for a single moment that in view of the geographical position in which they were situated they could avoid participation in a war in which Germany and Italy were involved. I added that in Prague we had no such naïve illusions.

But what I was told was a clear indication that in order to guard itself against a conflict between Germany and Italy on the one side and France on the other, Yugoslavia intended to make agreements with what was subsequently to become the Axis. Yet in spite of this the Yugoslav dictators assured me that they were remaining faithful to the Little Entente even though they would not conclude any new treaties with us. Such were the circumstances in which I paid my first very disagreeable and even painful visit to Yugoslavia in 18 years.

From my talks with Prince Paul and with the opposition (and with

delegates of the Yugoslav Sokol)* I perceived not only a change in the orientation of foreign policy, but also a quickly progressing internal decomposition disguised by Stojadinović's superficial Fascist authoritarianism and pompous and affected arrogance.

I asked myself whether this meant that Yugoslavia was irretrievably lost for us in the approaching crisis.[17] After my return to Prague, however, I did not send quite so pessimistic a report to Paris. I was still hoping that the new political orientation of Yugoslavia, namely, its going over to the Axis, would be delayed by my journey.† But I was soon convinced that the whole process was continuing—by this time with the addition of Hungary to the plot.

Nevertheless, I tried for the third time to stop this development—when 'Führer' Stojadinović came to the funeral of President Masaryk in September, 1937, I talked with him for four hours in the Presidential Castle. I reproached him sharply for violating the obligations of the Little Entente when he concealed his negotiations with Mussolini, hypocritically coquetted with the Hungarians and negotiated with Hitler behind our back. He excused himself very insincerely. I explained to him that the European crisis was rapidly approaching, that I was doing all I could to ensure that France and the Soviet Union—which were and would be our powerful allies—should be prepared for it together with ourselves, that in the end there would come a catastrophic defeat for Germany and the rest. But I added that we all would have to hold out and stand faithfully together. Finally he was—sincerely or insincerely?—moved, touched and tears even came into his eyes. But he confessed that he had been invited to pay a political visit to Berlin. I asked him emphatically, and urged him, not to go. He did not promise anything, however, and ultimately went to Berlin on January 17th, 1938. At Karinhall, he boastfully made friends with Göring and *finally made him a secret promise that Yugoslavia would not oppose the 'Anschluss' with Austria and would not interfere in a conflict between Germany and Czechoslovakia but would remain neutral . . .*

Yugoslavia did remain neutral so long as it suited Germany and Italy. From 1940 Berlin began to exert pressure on Yugoslavia to make a formal adherence to the Axis and contribute directly to the war of Germany against Great Britain. At that time I was already able to deliver to the

*A large contingent of Yugoslav Sokols participated in the Sokol Festival in Prague in the following summer, when tension between Czechoslovakia and Germany was growing daily, and received a rapturous welcome from the spectators (Tr.).

†The official statement issued in Belgrade at the end of the visit spoke of 'the harmony of views, and unity of policy and aims, of the two kindred peoples which remain inseparably linked in the future.' (Tr.).

Yugoslav Minister in London, Subotić, the plans which Berlin and Rome had prepared in advance for the partition of Yugoslavia. (I received these plans in London through our excellently working underground organisation at home, which had obtained them direct from sources inside the German General Staff in Berlin.) Such was the reward Mussolini and Hitler had prepared for Prince Paul's and Stojadinovič's services! Even earlier, during his official journey to Berlin in April, 1939, Prince Paul had himself heard from Hitler that after the German victory and the introduction of the New European Order, Yugoslavia would not have to trouble either about an army of its own or about a foreign policy. Germany would take care of such matters.

Shortly before his fall at the beginning of the year 1941, Prince Paul complained to his Minister in Ankara, whom he had called home in a critical situation because of new pressure from Berlin: 'I have already done everything Berlin wished me to do. We left the Little Entente, we dissolved the Balkan Entente, we have conformed to the policy of Berlin in everything—what else in God's name does Hitler want of us?' Not long afterwards he learned directly and officially of all the plans of Hitler and Mussolini and he could at last understand the whole tragic situation into which his policy had brought Yugoslavia.

Such was the moral and political catastrophe which overwhelmed everyone who deserted the path of right and began to come to terms with Hitler in this threatening European maelstrom. In excusing themselves for having done so, some might argue that even we who remained faithful to our principles were nevertheless not saved from Nazi occupation by our fidelity. Yes, but what an enormous moral difference lies between us! Our official policy had been warning the world for years, and right to the last moment it had stood firm in desperate opposition against capitulation to Fascism and finally it was forsaken by nearly the whole world. When our Nation had been sacrificed and thrown to the mercy of Nazism, our people, step-by-step, rose again and rallied finally in unanimous resistance! What an example for the future of the Nation!

I only wish to make it clear that in the years 1936–38 Czechoslovak policy rightly diagnosed what was the matter in Europe. It did everything, really everything, to retrieve the situation of Czechoslovakia, of its friends and of all Europe in face of Fascist gangsterism and pan-German Nazism and of war itself. *In that period when the European and world crisis was approaching, there was no State in Europe which could have a clearer conscience of doing its duty towards its Nation and its friends than the Czechoslovak Republic under the presidency of Masaryk and myself.*

In saying this, I do not want to assert, of course, that everything was as it should be in Czechoslovakia. There were among us influential persons and important political circles either without the slightest conception of the real situation in Europe, or egotistically unwilling to understand what was at stake, what was coming and what was to be and must be done. Some of them—they were few—coquetted with Fascism and admired Hitler's methods. They went to Berlin and then reported at home how they had found 'order' there and how 'Germany was prosperous and flourishing'. From 1935, these people were thinking in terms of co-operation with Henlein or even preparing it and they were turning up their noses about everything that happened in the 'Hrad' (President's Castle). They understood later what was the matter, when it was already too late and after the war the Nation dealt with nearly all who had doubted.*

My official journey to France had been agreed upon for June, 1938. But meanwhile the course of events in France showed that Paris, too, was definitely moving towards 'appeasement'. The critical moment came after April 10th, 1938, when the Daladier Government took office with Georges Bonnet as Minister for Foreign Affairs. It deliberately steered French policy away from France's Central European alliances. I soon realised this when, at the beginning of June, 1938, our Legation in Paris was officially asked by the Quai d'Orsay to postpone my visit to Paris, the date of which had already been fixed. The reason given was that one of the items on my programme was the unveiling of a memorial for the Czechoslovak Army in France in 1918 at Darney, in the presence of President Albert Lebrun. We were informed that Berlin would consider this a provocation.

During all those exacting and exhausting negotiations (from 1935 onwards), I tried my utmost to steer a straight course with the Soviet Union on one side and France on the other. On June 4th, 1936, after the French elections which resulted in the formation of the government of the Popular Front, the new Premier, Léon Blum, had sent me a message that France would never again behave with such weakness as his predecessor had done at the time of the occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and assured me that his Government would be strong and firm towards Germany and that we might count on this.

This was really France's last stand. The Foreign Minister, J. Paul-Boncour, sent me a number of messages in the same strain. He tried

*President Beneš is here referring to the so-called 'Retribution Decrees' under which those who had collaborated with the Germans were tried and sentenced. A number of alleged collaborators who joined the Communists just before the end of the war were not however brought to trial, and some of course had managed to escape abroad (Tr.).

especially to re-establish the Eastern front of the Little Entente and he also tried to win over Poland. On the direct intervention of Paul-Boncour, Leon Noël, then French Ambassador in Warsaw, came to me in Prague to ask whether he could assure Warsaw that Czechoslovakia would carry out its Locarno obligations towards France if Poland were attacked by Germany and France went to its aid. In agreement with Foreign Minister Krofta, I answered categorically 'yes': that Czechoslovakia would intervene with arms at the side of France and Poland in the spirit of its Locarno obligations. Paul-Boncour then assured me that he would try to force Warsaw to undertake the same obligation in case of a German attack on Czechoslovakia. Noël really attempted to do this, but in vain. *Warsaw did not answer.*

Nevertheless, I tried again to reach an agreement with Poland in these years while the crisis was developing. When in mid-August, 1936, the Chief of the French General Staff, General Gamelin, passed through Czechoslovakia on his way to Poland, I sent General Faucher* to see him in his train and give him a *written* invitation to the Polish Government to the effect that having in view the serious situation and the fact that a European crisis was well on the way, we should start preparations for Polish-Czechoslovak military co-operation. General Gamelin spoke about the matter to the President of the Polish Republic and General Smigly-Rydz and handed them the offer which General Faucher had delivered to him. He received the evasive answer that he, a soldier, must understand that this was primarily a political question. There was no further answer. When, as Marshal, Smigly-Rydz returned General Gamelin's visit to Paris on September 6th, 1936, he was asked by French spokesmen, at our request, to say what Poland would do in the case of a German attack on Czechoslovakia. They received the very curt answer that Poland was bound to Czechoslovakia only through membership of the League of Nations and the obligations which resulted therefrom.

Nevertheless, Léon Blum, in agreement with Prague, made another attempt to win back Belgrade and *proposed, with our explicit consent, a treaty of alliance between France and Yugoslavia.* This was politely refused like the offer Minister Krofta had made, with the knowledge of Paris, at Topolčianky on September 12th, 1936, when we invited our two partners in the Little Entente to change our separate alliances into a general alliance of the countries of the Little Entente with France.

Even the journey of Yvon Delbos, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the

*Head of the French Military Mission in Czechoslovakia. See page 27 (Tr.).

Chautemps' Government which succeeded Léon Blum's, to Warsaw, Bucharest, Belgrade and Prague in December, 1937, failed to halt the process of deterioration. *Central Europe—with the exception of Czechoslovakia—had no longer a common policy with France.*

By the summer of 1937, it was clear from what had happened that on the Continent of Europe only France, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union remained in favour of determined and consistent resistance to the onslaught of the Fascist Powers and France was already wavering as a result of the subversive activities of her reaction. Great Britain at that time was withdrawing into its island shell. On June 18th, 1935, it had concluded a unilateral naval agreement with Germany, which was advantageous for Great Britain. Later, on April 16th, 1938, it signed quite a number of 'appeasement' treaties with Italy, which came into force on November 16th, 1938. Belgium, seeing the general trend in Europe and being deprived of its chief safeguards under the Locarno Treaties by Hitler's occupation of the left bank of the Rhine, returned on April 24th, 1937, to its former useless policy of neutrality. It renounced the alliance with France and Great Britain and on October 13th, 1937, accepted from Germany the treacherous and worthless signature of a treaty promising to respect Belgian integrity. Thus, everyone in Europe was spinelessly, if resignedly, running away from the fight for the defence of democracy and was 'safeguarding' himself alone by means of blind negotiations with perfidious Hitlerite Germany and dictatorial Italy.

In these moments of apprehension, trouble and anxiety, I asked myself again and again just where all this could end. I had sufficient diplomatic experience and understanding of the historical logic of great events to see that Europe was hastening to its doom as a result of universal selfishness. It will be easy to understand my feelings in the years 1936–38 when I directly sensed how, step-by-step, the life work of Masaryk and myself was collapsing and the world was gliding down into the abyss.

(*c*) The Last Steps of France to her Fall at Munich

Such was the situation which faced the Czechoslovak Republic in March, 1938—that is, just before the last act but one of the violent Fascist and Nazi policy of destroying Europe, namely, the annexation of Austria. It seemed to me virtually certain that the annexation of Austria was the immediate prelude to a Second World War. In May, 1928, on my first post-war visit to Berlin, I had told State Secretary von Schubert and Minister Stresemann that if Austria were annexed by Germany, whether

by violence or not, they could expect with certainty that within six months there would be a great European crisis out of which would come a new European war. (Our Minister in Berlin, Dr. Chvalkovský, was present at that conversation and took it down). Stresemann who was already seriously ill made written comments on this talk—he lay in his bedroom at the time and sent the whole paper to the various leading officials of his Ministry. *It was said* that he gave a warning against such a step. After my departure from Berlin our conversation leaked out. It was untruthfully reported (and used as a propaganda weapon against me) that I had threatened Berlin with a European war. I purposely repeated this Berlin conversation to the German Minister in Prague, Eisenlohr, in 1936–38 on several occasions as a warning when Neurath began to declare the Austrian question to be a 'Familienangelegenheit'. Within six months after the annexation of Austria the crisis came—the crisis in which Czechoslovakia was the stake. And from that crisis the second World War developed inevitably.

At the time of the Austrian crisis I was waiting to see what the Great Powers, France and Great Britain, were going to do, and whether Austria or some other country would turn to the League of Nations. It is necessary to point out that it was the duty of each member of the Council of the League of Nations to file a complaint against Germany at Geneva. When in 1931 Brüning and Curtius attempted the 'Anschluss' and *Czechoslovakia was a member of the Council,* we at once turned to Geneva as well as to Paris and Rome with a protest and an appeal. The whole question had necessarily to come before the League immediately afterwards. But in 1938 all Europe was already so far gone that Geneva as an instrument of European democracy was already dead. This was proved on several other occasions before the League itself closed down during the war. It only came to life once during this period when, in December, 1939, thanks to the extraordinary activity of the Secretary-General J. Avenol and the ministers Daladier and Bonnet and the vigorous intervention of the American Ambassador Bullitt, the League took action against the Soviet Union over its war against Finland. (The Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations on December 14th, 1939.)

After the annexation of Austria in April, 1938, the progress of France towards 'appeasement' culminated in a political development which I have already mentioned. When the government of Chautemps fell on April 9th, Edouard Daladier was entrusted with the formation of a new Cabinet. On forming his new Government he first invited Paul-Boncour to a talk and discussed with him the question of his taking over the Ministry for

Foreign Affairs. Paul-Boncour sketched to him the principles of his well-known traditional policy: collective security, Geneva, alliance with Great Britain, co-operation with the Little Entente and, if possible, with Poland and therewith a new strengthening of the unity with Allied Central Europe and finally strong emphasis on the Franco-Soviet Treaty.

Daladier declared he would think it over. Then he called Georges Bonnet and listened to his programme which was already based on what was called 'appeasement'—that is, on the policy of reserve in Central European, Eastern European and Spanish affairs, on a plan for agreement with Fascist Italy, on the execution of a cautious, distrustful policy towards the Soviet Union and on turning French policy primarily towards France itself and its great colonial Empire. At the same time the French Right, led by Flandin, warned Daladier that they would give no support to his Government if Paul-Boncour became Minister for Foreign Affairs.

On the next day Daladier told Paul-Boncour on the telephone that he had given the Foreign Ministry to G. Bonnet. This was the first unequivocal and official withdrawal of France from Central European affairs, the first clear and outspoken renunciation of a policy which France had followed for nearly twenty years.

Was this a definitive expression of the consciousness of the weakness of France in a crisis? Was this another grave proof of the increasing internal decomposition which progressed still further after the fall of the Popular Front? Was it the fear of war and of its social consequences in a France internally disrupted? Or was it merely the renewal of the former policy of the Four-Power Pact which already in 1933 had advocated for France and Great Britain the same concept: a withdrawal to their own colonial empires and the abandonment of the so-called continental policy (especially in Central Europe) which Daladier had explicitly accepted as early as 1934, giving Mussolini and Hitler the right to expand into Central Europe, the Balkans and eastward against the Soviet Union?

Actually, it was all of these things. *It was the prologue to Munich and also to the capitulation of France in 1940.*

Daladier was a man who for many years had never forgotten to point out whenever occasion offered that he had not been at Versailles, that he was not responsible for the Peace Treaties of 1919, that it was necessary to accommodate oneself to the new developments, that France could not make itself responsible for the disordered Central European States. His extremely adverse and contemptuous, even sneering, remarks about Poland and Rumania were at that time everywhere known and notorious in the Paris salons. He surrounded himself in his Cabinet with a number of known

defeatists. Some of them were old and disillusioned pro-Austrian adversaries of the post-war allies in Central Europe, especially of democratic Czechoslovakia (de Monzie!—who had been the advocate of Hungarian noblemen in their lawsuits against Czechoslovakia before international courts in the matter of landed estates). Frivolous, immoral and politically corrupt persons were among his associates.

Georges Bonnet was known as ever ready for compromise. To him any means was good enough provided it helped him get what he wanted. He was, in the worst sense of the word, a typical politician. His normal practice was to have several—at least two—policies at once; to give as Minister written and telegraphic instructions correctly in line with public or official declarations by the Government and at the same time verbal orders in quite the opposite sense which disavowed his own public declarations or instructions sent in writing. In the country with which he was negotiating he would have an official envoy for the first policy and a confidential agent for the second so that he could speak to everybody as it suited him at the moment. He considered the former basic policy of French alliances as nothing more than a stock of props to make use of in any way that circumstances dictated.

Afraid of the social and revolutionary consequences of war in France, Bonnet was *a priori* against any decided or war-like resistance to Hitler's policy of expansion. At most he would have liked to see war between Nazism and Bolshevism. If he ever spoke of remaining faithful to us or to signed treaties, it was only because he thought for a while that such declarations might deter Germany from a '*fait accompli*' by a surprise coup which would unchain a sudden war. He did not speak in such terms because he was really prepared to put our treaty of alliance with France into effect.

This was the background when we had our first serious conflict with Germany on May 21st, 1938. Daladier, and especially Bonnet, and the British Government too, had been given definite proof on that occasion that we were prepared to fight if attacked and that therefore—if they did not intervene in time in one way or another—there really would be a war which France would have to enter in accordance with its treaties with us the moment Hitler committed an act of violence against us. From that moment Georges Bonnet worked feverishly to frustrate our determined policy and to render our military defences untenable at any cost. For this he had a number of supporters in Daladier's Cabinet. I shall return to this subject in greater detail in my book dealing with the events which led up to the agreement of the four Great Powers at Munich.

(*d*) We and the Soviet Union work together to save peace—Munich

Thus in April, 1938, when the Daladier-Bonnet administration took office in France, we and the Soviet Union were politically isolated in Europe *in basic and determined anti-Fascism and anti-Nazism.*

Our co-operation with the Soviet Union after the conclusion of our treaty of 1935 was, in general, normal, lasting and consistent. Politically we were in regular contact with one another and our loyal exchange of views on the general situation was never interrupted. We were thus able to establish a certain degree of co-ordination in our respective policies.

Already on May 30th, 1935, I had agreed that a Czechoslovak military delegation led by the chief of our Air Force, General Fajfr, should pay an official visit to the Soviet Union. Thus started our first air co-operation with Moscow. In August of the same year a delegation of the Soviet army, led by General Shaposhnikov, participated in our first large-scale manœuvres, saw our whole armaments industry and prepared the way for our deliveries of essential armament material to the Soviet Army.

In September a delegation of the Czechoslovak Army led by the Chief of the General Staff, General Krejčí, left for the main manoeuvres of the Soviet Army. They returned literally surprised, and, from a military point of view, even enthusiastic about what they had seen in the Soviet Union. General Krejčí declared after his return that the 'Red Army, its discipline, its high morale and its mechanised equipment were a fresh inspiration for every Russian', adding that 'the energy of the Government, its unprecedented efforts, as well as the strength of the Russian soldier, call for the admiration of every military expert'. At that time the West did not accept our valuation of the Soviet Army and its possibilities. But this merely encouraged us to fix our eyes more steadily on the Soviet Union and to try to get to know and understand it.

In October, 1935, a group of Soviet journalists paid an official visit to Czechoslovakia. On that occasion, I myself as Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Soviet envoy, Alexandrovskij, both spoke in very clear terms about our new Treaty of Alliance, which '*was to stop the preparations of those nations in our vicinity which are ready to disturb the peace by large-scale military adventures and to try to subdue their peace-loving neighbours*'. Similar declarations and manifestations of various kinds followed with increasing frequency in the years 1936 and 1937 coupled with practical co-operation in the sphere of aviation, armaments and the mutual exchange of political and military information. This gave German, Polish and Hungarian propa-

gandists an increasing number of pretexts for scurrilous attacks on Czechoslovakia and for attempts to bring us into discredit in the eyes of the Western European Powers as the 'chief propagators of Bolshevism in Europe'. But we really had no other aim than to prevent by all means at our disposal the outbreak of a second World War which Germany with her policy and ideological and material preparations was visibly preparing to unchain.

Our views about developments in Germany and also in Western Europe were already at that time essentially the same as those of the Soviet Government though Moscow undoubtedly viewed the European scene far more pessimistically than did Prague. In agreement with Moscow we tried on a number of occasions to establish closer political and military co-operation between the West and the Soviet Union. So, for example, in 1938, we were asked by the Soviet Minister in Prague to help to induce the West (especially France) to give active help in equipping the Soviet Navy with some special weapons. I intervened. I repeated my request. I stressed the importance of this help but I had no success whatsoever. I was forced to conclude that those in power in France clearly did not want to help.

In view of the feverish war preparations of Germany we did all that could be done so far as Moscow and Prague were concerned. As already indicated, we agreed to deliver considerable quantities of certain special weapons from our armament factories, weapons which the Soviet Army especially needed and could not get from France or anywhere else. But what was still more important, we also agreed, at my request, on the exchange of temporary military missions to examine our joint preparations for defence and mutual aid and to co-ordinate preparations in all necessary points. In the summer of 1937, another Soviet military mission inspected all our frontier fortifications, our chief armament factories and our air force. As a result, other measures were taken and agreements concluded, especially in connection with Soviet air assistance in case of a German attack on Czechoslovakia (an extension of our air-fields was also agreed, but at the time of Munich this had not been finished). During the visit of Colonel Fr. Moravec* to Moscow in 1938, an agreement was reached about the exchange of military and intelligence information.

After the visit of the Soviet Mission to Czechoslovakia, a similar Czechoslovak military mission, led by General Husárek, was sent to the Soviet Union. The members were shown everything we needed to know:

*Colonel, afterwards General, Moravec was Director of Military Intelligence of the Czechoslovak Forces in Great Britain during the war. After the Communist Revolution of February, 1948, he left Czechoslovakia and is now in America (Tr.).

the state of Soviet preparations for the defence of Soviet territory, the state of preparedness of their armament industry, and especially also the state of the Soviet Army and Air Force. The written report of our military mission on the condition and preparations of the Soviet Army was not only valuable then and in 1938, but much more so later, during the second World War when it helped us to estimate Soviet military preparedness for the European war, the military possibilities of the Soviet Union and Soviet military policy in general after 1941.

By the spring of 1938, and from then to September, I believe everything that the international situation and our mutual relations made possible under the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1935 was actually done. I confess that some of our commitments which we had undertaken and which were still in course of preparation could not be entirely carried out by September, 1938 (as, for example, our new fortifications along the Austrian frontier).* There were several energetic but unsuccessful attempts by Soviet diplomacy to organise a conference of military experts of the General Staffs in the critical period before Munich to exchange views on the common defence of West and East Europe against a Fascist attack. *On my special instructions we were always ready and fully prepared for such a conference, but right up to the end of September, 1938, we never succeeded in getting the French, British and other States to agree.*

After our mobilisation in May, 1938, I permitted our Chief of Staff, General Krejčí, to approach General Gamelin direct in writing with an offer to go to Paris to discuss concrete measures about the co-ordination of an eventual Czechoslovak and French mobilisation. After some time, General Krejčí received a written answer from General Gamelin to the effect *that in such a matter he could only do what his Government ordered, and that at the moment he had had no instructions on the subject.*

Our soldiers received no further message, nor were they invited to Paris. Thus we learned shortly before the Munich crisis that *the French army either did not want or was unable to make any such preparations.* The French High Command knew exactly what the attitude of the Daladier-Bonnet Government was. General Gamelin could surely have given such an answer only after consultation with his Minister of War, Edouard Daladier.

In September, 1938, therefore, we were left in military, as well as in political, isolation with the Soviet Union to prepare our defence against a Nazi attack. We were also well aware not only of our own moral, political and military preparedness, but also had a general picture of the condition of Western

*See pp. 28, 29 (Tr.).

Europe; as well as of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, in regard to these matters.*

At that moment indeed Europe was in every respect ripe to accept without a fight the orders of the Berchtesgaden corporal. When Czechoslovakia vigorously resisted his dictation in the September negotiations with our German citizens, we first of all received a joint note from the British and French Governments on September 19th, 1938, insisting that we should accept without amendment the draft of a capitulation based essentially on an agreement reached by Hitler and Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden on September 15th. When we refused, there arrived from France and Great Britain on September 21st an ultimatum accompanied by emphatic personal interventions in Prague during the night on the part of the Ministers of both countries and repeated later in writing. We were informed that if we did not accept their plan for the cession of the so-called Sudeten regions, they would leave us to our fate, which, they said, we had brought upon ourselves. They explained that *they certainly would not go to war with Germany just 'to keep the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia'*. I felt very keenly the fact that there were at that time so few in France and Great Britain who understood that something much more serious was at stake for Europe than the retention of the so-called Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia.

The measure of this fearful European development was now full, precipitating Europe into ruin. Through three dreadful years I had watched the whole tragedy unfolding, knowing to the full what was at stake. We had resisted desperately with all our strength . . .

And then, from Munich, during the night of September 30th our State and Nation received the stunning blow: Without our participation and in spite of the mobilisation of our whole Army, the Munich Agreement—fatal for Europe and the whole world—was concluded and signed by the four Great Powers—and then was forced upon us.

But about this I shall report to the Nation in another volume.†

*It seems clear from this sentence, which was evidently worded with great care, that President Beneš had no illusions about the possibility of resisting Hitler in 1938 if the Western Democracies refused to fight.

†This was never finished (Tr.).

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

[1]The Locarno Treaties were signed in London on December 1st, 1925.

[2]Perhaps there will be another opportunity to tell more about my discussions with Colonel Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, at Geneva in the spring of 1933 when we almost reached full agreement about common action between the Little Entente and Poland against the Four-Power Pact. We agreed that Colonel Beck should pay a visit to Prague and we also agreed on future procedure as well as to try to reach a full Czechoslovak-Polish understanding. The next Polish Minister in Prague, Edward Raczynski—who succeeded Mr. Grzybowski—rendered very effective help.* But after an exchange of telegrams between Beck and Warsaw, there came from Warsaw—probably from Marshal Pilsudski himself—the uncompromising answer: 'never', and the discussions ended forthwith. This seems to mark the beginning of the preparations for the final change of Polish policy towards Germany. It was said that Pilsudski had then developed the theory that Poland was more and more becoming a Great Power and so both could and must show France that it could follow an independent policy.

[3]On January 28th, 1934, I sent the following circular cable to our Legations in which I summarized this conversation and informed them of our views:

'With regard to the Polish-German treaty I am sending you this information on our attitude:

1. We were informed by our Minister in Berlin immediately after the publication of the German-Polish communiqué of November 15th, 1933, that negotiations were in progress and that the two parties intended to express German-Polish relations in the form of a treaty in the spirit of that communiqué. Information has reached us that the new relationship would be expressed in the form of a 'Declaration'. On January 19th, 1934, our Minister in Warsaw informed us that a treaty was being prepared and that certain circles asserted that two of the conditions were that Poland should disinterest itself in regard to Austria and should refrain from concluding a treaty with Czechoslovakia. On the same day I had a conversation with Minister Beck at Geneva but he said nothing about negotiating and signing any declaration.

2. On January 27th, the Polish Prime Minister at Prague informed me officially on behalf of his Government that:

   (*a*) The Polish Government stresses that nothing has been discussed between the Polish and German Governments except what was covered by the text of the Declaration. To my question whether the Declaration was signed on the conditions mentioned under (1) above, he replied that the communication he had received on the subject indicated a negative answer but that he would transmit my question to his Government.

   (*b*) The Declaration was only the continuation of negotiations based on the communiqué of November 15th, 1933, and an expression in writing of what had then been said orally.

*Count Raczynski was afterwards Foreign Minister in General Sikowski's Government in exile. He is now living in England (Tr.).

(*c*) The Declaration was an appendix to Locarno concerning frontiers and apart from which the whole basis of Polish policy in regard to its other treaties and the League of Nations remained unchanged.

3. Our attitude to this affair is as follows:

(i) The Declaration has advantages and disadvantages but we do not believe that it will be observed either in respect of its terms or duration. It is certain that Warsaw errs if it believes the question of frontiers to be in abeyance for ten years. I believe that, in the clause about the solution of political, economic and cultural questions, the Germans, either explicitly or by means of a mental reservation, have reserved the right to discuss the question of the frontiers in bilateral negotiations and that therefore in the Declaration itself there is already the germ of future disputes.

(ii) The advantages of this agreement *for Germany* are as follows:

(*a*) Hitler's Germany has broken the ring of isolation.

(*b*) Germany, which needs time for internal consolidation and to arm, benefits more from this respite than Poland.

(*c*) The agreement indirectly concerns the authority of the League of Nations and therefore serves the aims of those who are against Geneva.

(*d*) The most serious consequences will be that the agreement will be used against France in the disarmament discussions as a proof of German love of peace and therefore as a means of pressure on France to make concessions.

(iii) It is necessary to wait to see what effect this agreement will have on France's policy towards Germany and whether it will impel France towards an agreement with Germany and to concessions in the matter of disarmament. If so, new difficulties would arise with Poland, which does not want to disarm in any case and especially does not want to accept the MacDonald plan. But Poland expects that the Great Powers will not agree on disarmament, that therefore it will not have to disclose its own disinclination for disarmament and that it will thus be able to avoid a dispute with Germany on this issue. Disputes about armaments in Poland's opinion will be limited to the Western Powers. Whether this view is correct will appear in the near future.

4. Our policy remains unchanged. Our efforts for a rapprochement with Poland continue. For our part we are quite sincere; we offered a treaty of eternal friendship and in conversations with Beck at Geneva I again went into all matters in detail. Now we will simply wait.

5. I expect Germany will find some means of intimating that it is willing to enter into the same kind of agreement with us as with Poland. Though we will not reject *a priori* the possibility of talks, we will show no initiative and will not ask for anything. We have no frontier or other disputes with Germany and we therefore need not do what Poland has done now. But if there should be talks or negotiations on whatever subject, we will do nothing without the Little Entente and without loyally discussing matters with France beforehand. Similarly towards Germany our behaviour in this respect will of course be loyal and open. But we could not accept anything which either directly or indirectly impairs the authority of the League of Nations.

6. The fact that Germany's hands will be somewhat freed towards Austria does not alarm us at the moment. Perhaps this fact will help to clear up Italian policy and underline the truth that the Austrian problem has really become a European problem and is not merely a problem for us and France. This may hasten a European solution.

7. In Moscow, the Polish-German rapprochement naturally arouses distrust.

To what degree this declaration is an error for Polish and European policy will probably appear very soon. We must not be misled by public statements or declarations in the press.

E.B.

[4]It is worth mentioning that my conversations with King Carol from 1945 onwards made clear to me his unconcealed admiration for the policy of Hitler and for Hitler's person. King Carol himself openly imitated Mussolini in his methods and internal policy —sometimes even in minute details. But he tried sincerely to remain faithful to the policy of the Little Entente as long as possible.*

[5]I discussed very reservedly with Schuschnigg during his earlier visit to Prague (January 17th, 1936) the possibility of mutual aid against Nazi Germany. I received the impression that Austria did not dare to enter into such an arrangement.

[6]As was proved during the Nuremberg Trials, the Germans as early as 1937 had made precise military plans and calculations for attacking Czechoslovakia, which shows the value of Hitler's negotiations for permanent peace with Czechoslavakia! The technique was to have been the same as Hitler later used against all his victims.

[7]The text of the draft treaty which I prepared and sent to Berlin, is as follows:

The President of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Führer of the German Reich, desirous of contributing to the maintenance of general peace in Europe and in the same degree resolved to maintain peace between Czechoslovakia and Germany by securing the peaceful settlement of disputes which may arise between the two States,

Recognising that the rights of States cannot be changed without their consent and mindful of the fact that the sincere observance of the rules for the peaceful settlement of international disputes enables the two States to solve the problems which might divide them without the use of force,

Have decided to reaffirm and to extend the Treaty of October 16th, 1925, between the Czechoslovak Republic and the German Reich, and for this purpose have appointed as their respective plenipotentiaries:

the President of the Czechoslovak Republic,

Mr.....

The Führer of the German Reich,

Mr.....

who after exchanging their full powers, found to be in good and due form, have agreed on the following articles:

*Rumania was the only one of Czechoslovakia's Allies which mobilised at the time of Munich (Tr.).

Article One

The High Contracting Parties reaffirm the principles which animated them when they concluded the Treaty of October 16th, 1925,* and pledge themselves to continue to observe the terms of this Treaty.

Article Two

Each of the High Contracting Parties shall respect the sovereignty of the other Party and its full and undisturbed execution within the whole State territory and undertakes not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other Party. As such are declared to be all matters which under international law are left to the exclusive competence of individual States including the form of their political and social organisation.

Article Three

The High Contracting Parties undertake to continue in good neighbourly relations which they will develop, deepen and strengthen.

Article Four

The High Contracting Parties pledge themselves to extend and develop their economic co-operation and trade relations. To this end they will in particular enter into negotiations for a new trade agreement on a more lasting and broader basis.

Article Five

The High Contracting Parties undertake to solve all current disputes arising from their political, economic, cultural and other relations in a friendly spirit through diplomatic channels.

Article Six

This Treaty, the Czechoslovak and German texts of which shall have equal validity, shall be ratified and the instruments of ratification shall be exchanged as soon as possible in Berlin/Prague. The treaty shall become effective immediately after the exchange of the instruments of ratification and shall remain in force under the same conditions as the Treaty mentioned in Article One of the present Treaty.

In faith whereof the plenipotentiaries have signed this Treaty and have hereto affixed their seals.

Done at Prague/Berlin in the Czechoslovak and German languages on..... 1937.

[8]As a slip of the tongue by Trauttmannsdorff had unwittingly revealed, these negotiations were with the anti-Stalin clique in the U.S.S.R., Marshal Tukhatchevsky, Rykov and others. Hitler expected these negotiations to be successful and he was therefore not interested in bringing the discussions with us to a speedy conclusion. If the attempt to disrupt the Soviet Union had succeeded, the whole situation in Europe would have been transformed, but Stalin prevented this just in time. I at once informed the Soviet Minister at Prague, Alexandrovsky, of what I had learned from Berlin about the Mastný-Trauttmannsdorff talks.

[9]I reasoned as follows: Either Hitler really means what he says, in which case his offer is a sign of extreme weakness and we must therefore avoid compromising ourselves as

*One of the Locarno series (Tr.).

Poland has done; or it is an infamous fraud, in which case it is still more important for us not to depart from our policy, the honesty of which will be an asset to us.

[10]Details will be given in my book on the Munich Crisis.

[11]General S. Ingr was then on our General Staff and took part in this conference.*

[12]The whole affair was shrouded in strict secrecy at Geneva. But I nevertheless learned of it in time and I had two long talks with MacDonald—on March 13th and again on March 17th, on the day of MacDonald's and Simon's departure for Rome—and warned him emphatically about Mussolini and his plans. It was in vain; MacDonald and Simon returned to Geneva and then went back to London with the draft of the Four-Power Pact already in their pockets.

[13]Laval's meeting with Göring, who was visiting the grave of Pilsudski in Cracow on May 18th, 1935, was of importance in this connection for it was a means of starting one of Laval's famous negotiations.

[14]Now Lord Templewood.

[15]See *Failure of a Mission*, London, 1940, by Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson, p. 152.†

[16]Great Britain gave direct help to Hitler in these rearmament plans when it confirmed and legalized his violation of the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty by the conclusion of the British-German Naval Treaty of June 18th, 1935.

[17]Immediately after my journey to Belgrade the leaders of the Yugoslav opposition issued this declaration:

'For some time now there has prevailed among our people a growing apprehension that Mr. Stojadinović is changing the direction of the foreign policy of our Nation, founded on our alliance with France and the countries of the Little Entente and on friendship with Great Britain and the countries of the Balkan Entente. The events of the last three months prove that these apprehensions are very well founded. Abandoning the foreign policy we have hitherto pursued—a policy which has been and remains the expression of the real convictions of our people, the Stojadinović Government is leaning towards the "Berlin-Rome" Axis and aligning our foreign policy with that of Rome and Berlin with the object of separating Yugoslavia from her allies.

'The régime of Stojadinović first began to weaken the Little Entente. When at Milan, Mussolini supported the revision of Hungary's frontiers, a storm of protest rose from our allies, the Rumanians and Czechoslovaks. Our Government not only did not protest, but took steps to prevent these protests being mentioned in our press. We

*Afterwards Commander of the Czechoslovak forces in Great Britain. He was regarded with suspicion by the Soviet Union and was retired from the army in 1946. He then became Czechoslovak Minister to Finland, a post which he resigned after the Communist *coup d'état* in February, 1948 (Tr.).

†The exact words used by Sir Nevile are: 'Fairly accurate details of the number of modern anti-aircraft guns we then possessed as well as of the unpreparedness of England's air defences generally.' (Tr.).

rejoice at every rapprochement with our brothers, the Bulgarian Nation, but we think the method chosen is not the right one. The treaty with Bulgaria not only does not guarantee the security of our frontiers but does not even mention the fact that our new relationship does not weaken our obligations arising from the Balkan Entente with other Balkan countries.

'We recognise the importance of good relations with Italy, our most powerful neighbour. But the treaty with Italy, which involves close political, and perhaps even military, co-operation, has been realised at a moment when Italy is in extremely strained political relations with our ally, France, and our friend, Great Britain. These States are discussing with Italy questions of the utmost importance for their countries and Italy has been strengthened in its negotiations by this treaty. France and Great Britain are being weakened—and with our help.

'The Government of Stojadinović has also adopted an attitude towards the League of Nations which changes our whole policy. Neither in the treaty with Bulgaria, nor in that with Italy, is there any mention of obligations arising from the Covenant of the League of Nations. The Italian press even stresses the fact that the agreement with Yugoslavia is outside the sphere of the League of Nations. Stojadinović takes the same attitude towards the League of Nations as Italy and Germany.

'The Government of Stojadinović is today pursuing a foreign policy over which the public has no control and without regard for the requirements and feelings of the Nation. Criticism of the activities of the Government is not permitted. There is a danger that our allies and friends may overlook the fact that the policy of the Stojadinović Government is only the expression of a small group of men now in power. The Nation is far from such a policy, and our allies and friends should not have any doubts on this matter.'*

[18]J. Paul-Boncour has authoritatively described this fatal change in French policy in his book *Entre deux guerres*, pp. 96, sqq.

*The correctness of this estimate was shown when Prince Paul's Government was overthrown and Yugoslavia, in spite of overwhelming odds, joined Great Britain in the fight against Germany and Italy (Tr.).

CHAPTER II

THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1. *My Departure from Home—Beginning of the Second Liberation Fight abroad —America's interest in a country which had been prostrated by Munich*

ON October 1st, 1938—the day after the signing of the Munich Agreement —Marshal H. Göring officially informed Dr. V. Mastný, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, that Germany could not allow me to retain the office of President of the Republic. He would, he declared, never negotiate with me. At the same time he hinted that if I did not resign immediately, Germany, in carrying out the Munich Agreement, would proceed against Czechoslovakia with the utmost ruthlessness.

A similar declaration was made to the delegate of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, A. Heidrich,* by State Secretary Weizsäcker of the Berlin Foreign Office. Some members of our delegation which had gone to Berlin to take part in the discussions about the execution of the Munich Agreement reported to me in the same sense. Similar threats also reached me in Prague at the same time through unofficial channels and Dr. Jaroslav Preiss† on his return to Prague from Berlin brought me a message to this effect.

Nor was this all.

The whole Fascist network in Western, Central and Eastern Europe saw in the second President of the Republic a symbol of democratic and resolutely anti-Nazi policy, as well as the friend and political successor of Masaryk. It should be added that in the Berlin Sports Palace on September 26th Hitler himself had made a rude and ferocious attack on me in which he proclaimed me his implacable enemy and said plainly that it was a life and death struggle between him and me. He seldom spoke a truer word.

All this made me feel that it was necessary to go. To do so was in the best interests of the State, but it was also a means of expressing my personal opinion about the newly-created situation and of making an unmistakable protest against the Western European circles which had brought about the Munich 'appeasement'. In addition, I already sensed a change of mood at home.

*Mr. Arnošt Heidrich became the permanent head of the Czechoslovak Foreign Office in the Third Republic. He retained this post after the Communist Revolution of February, 1948, but later escaped from the country and went to the United States (Tr.).

†Chairman of the Živnostenská Bank (Tr.).

Accordingly, on October 5th, I announced my resignation in a letter to the new Government which I had previously nominated. Then in a broadcast speech I said farewell to the Czechoslovak people.[1] I spoke in studiously discreet and moderate terms, as the situation demanded, but seen in post-war perspective the speech was borne out by subsequent events. I asked my fellow-citizens to restrain their feelings in spite of the disaster which had happened to us, to abstain from recriminations and reproaches against other States, to avoid internal quarrels and not to lose either their self-confidence or their belief in the justice of our holy cause. I indicated that Munich was only the beginning: that other events would follow, that I would remain true to my principles and to democracy and that I would continue to work for the Nation elsewhere. Perhaps at that time only a few of my listeners clearly understood the meaning of my words. Again I thought of 'my plan' and the approaching war.

Wholly exhausted mentally and physically, with indescribable feelings in my heart and with heavy thoughts of the terrible political and moral upheaval which was convulsing Europe and would perhaps disrupt it completely, I departed with my family on October 6th, shortly after noon, from Prague Castle to Sezimovo Ustí in southern Bohemia. There I tried to recover from the heavy blows I had received during the previous year and especially during the preceding few months.

So that I should have time to prepare my future plans I intended to stay in my fatherland for several more weeks, at any rate until October 28th.* After that, I intended to leave either for Switzerland or for England and thence for the United States where on the offer of my American friends I had accepted the Chair of Sociology at Chicago University. But the tension between Prague and Berlin continued. The Berlin Government informed Prague that its plans concerning Czechoslovakia could only be of a provisional nature as long as I remained in the country; and the Prague Government, intimidated by the new threats from Berlin, sent me several special messages to Sezimovo Ustí, through Dr. J. Schieszl asking me to leave the country as soon as I could manage it. At the same time my nephew, Bohuš Beneš, arrived from London with earnest appeals and warnings from my friends there to leave the country as soon as I possibly could. So, in spite of the fact that I was far from well, I resolved to go to London as early as October 22nd, my chief reason being to avoid aggravating the position of the Government.

Before leaving the country I confided my opinions on the situation to my entourage in the President's Office and to some of my political friends,

*Independence Day (Tr.).

Prokop Drtina, Jar. Smutný, J. Jína, Zd. Chytil, Zd. Bořek-Dohalský, Dr. V. Girsa and others*, and warned them that the necessary preparations for the revival of the fight would have to be made. 'As soon as the second European war starts', I told them, 'we must again begin an all-round struggle, as in 1914. We will have to prepare the organisation of resistance at home, establish permanent contact with anti-Nazi Europe and organise an army at home and outside our frontiers for the fight against Germany on the side of the rest of Europe which will be forced to go to war in spite of the Munich treason—or rather because of it. A numerically strong political and military emigration will be needed and it must leave the country in time. Make all necessary preparations and without fail be ready by next year!'

In October, 1938, I expected the war to start not later than May or June, 1939—that is within about eight months after Munich. I was sure that it would be inaugurated by an attack against Poland which Germany was surely preparing to reward in this manner for Polish support to German policy during the previous years against us and France—especially during the Munich crisis. I expected, and fervently hoped, that post-Munich Czechoslovakia would still be to some extent independent when the war started.

After I reached London, Jan Masaryk and I discussed our future plans for co-operation. I also immediately organised an 'underground' connection with my country. Already in the second half of November the first political messenger from my Prague friends, Dr. Jaroslav Dràbek,† arrived in London. Other messengers followed regularly until my departure for America in February, 1939. Immediate effective help came from our Military Attaché in London, Colonel Kalla. I maintained active contact with my political friends at home and wrote hundreds of letters to them answering their numerous messages and questions to London, asking them to hold out, to be of good courage, not to give way to despair under

*Dr. Drtina, after working in President Beneš's Chancery in London during the war, became Minister of Justice in liberated Czechoslovakia. He incurred the enmity of the Communists and after being severely injured in a fall (in mysterious circumstances) from a window was put in Pankrac Gaol, but was afterwards released. Mr. Smutný was head of the President's Chancery during the war and became head of it when the Government returned to Czechoslovakia. He retired shortly after President Beneš died in September, 1948. He escaped abroad after the Communist *coup d'état* in February, 1945, and is now living in England. Of the others mentioned here, Dr. Dohalský was executed by the Nazis (Tr.).

†Dr. Drábek was a well-known Prague lawyer who acted as Public Prosecutor at the trial of Reichs Protektor K. H. Frank and various members of the Protectorate Government after the war (Tr.).

the impact of Munich, nor to faint-heartedness as a result of events at home in the so-called Second Republic. I wished by all means in my power to maintain a good morale at home and foster the hope of better times, so that war would not find us wholly unprepared.[2]

The development of political conditions in Czechoslovakia after Munich is well known: I was simply held responsible for Munich and all its consequences. The bitterest reproaches and most violent attacks were directed against me. It was so easy and convenient to put the whole responsibility on the man who in the fateful moment stood highest and therefore had the furthest to fall! I had told myself from the outset that it was not the moment either to discuss these things or to look for the real culprits or to quarrel about what had happened. I therefore silently accepted this responsibility and told myself that I must resolutely and patiently bear it until the march of events made an explanation possible. So I never protested, never defended myself, never reproached anyone, either at home or abroad. I did not even criticise France or Great Britain, Poland or Yugoslavia for their suicidal policy.

I made it a rule for my future procedure—without regard to what was happening at home—not to criticise the post-Munich Government in public, but on the contrary to facilitate its heavy task, and thus mitigate troubles at home and party strife. I held it to be better on the whole for future developments that I should temporarily bear all the responsibility on my own shoulders. For the time being I made it a rule not to appear politically in public, to be silent and wait until it was clear to all that a war would soon break out. Until that time I wanted to organise channels of communication with my country and prepare a permanent underground connection with the homeland for use when war started. In this mood I wrote from London in November, 1938, answering a letter from Dr. Lad. Rašín. I analysed the whole problem of Munich and our new situation and I hinted at my plans for the future. From that moment I counted on him as my future resistance collaborator.[3]

From similar considerations sprang my letter of November 30th, 1938, to Dr. Emil Hácha.[4] I congratulated him on his election as President—wishing thereby to ease the position of the post-Munich Government so that it should not be thought in Prague that for the time being I had any intention of interfering with the internal policy of the Second Republic or of making the Government's position *vis-à-vis* Berlin more difficult. I also wanted to indicate how in my opinion a true democrat should behave in the interests of State and national discipline in the face of a decision of unfavourable destiny.

Finally, from these considerations, presentiments and preparations sprang also my letter of January 27th, 1939, which I sent to the Prague Government via the London Legation shortly before leaving for the United States to inform it of my intentions and plans and to draw its attention to what it was to expect and for what it had to prepare itself, the State and the Nation.

This letter which was sent to Prague by the Chargé d'Affaires, K. Lisický,* Counsellor of our London Legation, was in the form of a discussion between him and me. I know for certain that it was received by Foreign Minister, Dr. Chvalkovský.

It ran as follows:

'1. Dr. Beneš stated that he was abstaining on principle from interfering in Czechoslovak internal affairs. He is keeping contact with his personal friends, answering the normal correspondence of all who write to him, but he does not intend to take part in internal political activities. Under present conditions he would regard the existence of various fronts directed against one another and fighting for power as out of tune with the situation. It is well that a second party† exists because this may serve to maintain the sympathy of the general public for us in Great Britain, France and America—a most necessary factor for our State if tension or even war should develop in Europe. It is necessary that both parties should assist one another in this situation. Dr. Beneš himself takes cognisance of one thing only: The State and its supreme interest. *Salus rei publicæ*; this must be today our only programme, one common to all.

'2. Similarly, as he resigned from the Presidency when he saw that in the new situation such a step was in the interest of the State, so he abstains, and intends to go on abstaining, from political actions which could bring difficulties to the Government in foreign policy. He is refraining from public pronouncements, interviews, articles, lectures and has refused to publish anything whatsoever lest this should be misused to the detriment of the State. He has given to his sojourn in England an entirely private character. It was devoted to the scientific preparation of

*Mr. Karel Lisický became Chargé d'Affaires of the Czechoslovak Legation in London when Jan Masaryk resigned after Munich.

†Shortly after Munich the numerous small political parties were consolidated into two: the Party of National Unity comprising Agrarians, Clericals, Small Traders and Fascists, and the Party of Labour comprising Socialists and the left wing section of the National Socialists. The Communist Party was declared illegal and a Decree was issued under which the Government's sanction was required before a new party could be formed. This prohibition remained in force when the Third Republic came into existence after the war (Tr.).

his future professional work at Chicago University or other American universities which have invited him to lecture. He intends to come back again to London in July for another visit with the object of preparing further scientific publications. (I may mention in this connection that Dr. Beneš has taken over the remainder of a lease of a small house in Putney, formerly let to his nephew, B. Beneš, an official of the information section of our Ministry.) While in America he will lecture on the development of democracy and its problems from the end of the eighteenth century to the present day. He will, of course, in the future as always, stand firmly for democracy, but he will remain on the theoretical field and if possible avoid touching upon actual events.

'3. Dr. Beneš is, of course, watching the development of the international situation with great attention. Having the opportunity to watch it from the broader forum which London provides, *he does not exclude the possibility of an acute crisis already breaking out in the spring* (1939), though the present paralysis of the West may still lead to another postponement of the conflict by further concessions to the totalitarian powers. In this case the conflict could come *later in that year* or in the *following year*, but Dr. Beneš does not exclude a paralysis lasting some years. He thinks the next stage of the attack will not be in the East,* but in a solution of the problem of the Mediterranean or even possibly in connection with the question of colonies.[5] After this the East will again come on to the list. But even if some sort of agreement should be reached now, he thinks a final solution by armed conflict is almost *inevitable*. This conflict will come under conditions which will not be so favourable for the West as last autumn when the West refused to 'fight for the Sudetenland'. It will be necessary to utilise our present grave situation and 'neutrality' by conserving our forces as much as possible not only now but also during the further development of events. He considers a German victory in an armed conflict to be out of question as everything points to America again intervening in the war. Finally, a victory for the West presents the only hope of consolidating Europe socially with the help of Britain and America and preventing either complete chaos and social disorganisation or plain bolshevism, this time a German variety. There must be no illusions about the possibility of either the world, or Europe alone, accepting a German victory and consequent domination of practically the whole of continental Europe. This means that, if necessary, the war will be a very long one or there will be a whole series of wars.

*i.e. East Europe—in other words, Poland (Tr.).

'4. If war comes, it must be clear to everybody at home that there can neither be several sides nor several parties. Immediately, from the very beginning, it must be clear to everyone that the State's watchword is "Neutrality". The conditions under which the war starts and its future development have to decide our further course of action. Every action taken abroad must be precisely co-ordinated with all requirements of the Nation and of the State at home so that the complications of the present difficult position in which the Nation finds itself may not be unduly increased. For this reason Dr. Beneš would take no arbitrary steps on his own responsibility nor act without full agreement even in such a case.

'5. Dr. Beneš does not hold himself to be a political emigrant and does not exclude from his future plans a return to his country if this should be right or suitable. He would, of course, return with the consent of the Government as he does not in the least intend to aggravate its present situation, the gravity of which he fully recognises, and he fully appreciates the activity of the Government under these conditions.

'6. He does not count on any German goodwill towards our State. Nobody can have the least confidence in any future German undertaking with regard to the whole of South-Eastern and Central Europe: Poland, Yugoslavia, and the rest. It is impossible to count on a general reconciliation or peace so long as the present divergence of regimes and the present supremacy of the dictatorships continue to exist in Europe. Tension and fresh conflicts will arise. It is therefore in the interest of the State and Nation to act under German pressure in matters of internal and foreign policy only in the case of the direst necessity so that in future such acts shall not divide us and cannot be misused against us when conditions change.

'7. In any case, in the judgment of Dr. Beneš, we are approaching a period which will bring changes of no smaller compass, or political, social and economic importance, than those brought about by the World War. This opinion is now shared by the great majority of people in competent circles in Britain and France. Whether this will happen immediately or in this or the following year, or in the years to come, it is hard to say and nobody dares to risk a definite prophecy. But it is with such apprehensions that nearly all are looking towards the future. Some are still waiting for the fall of one or other of the dictatorships owing to their internal difficulties. Dr. Beneš thinks that, without impulse from outside, their downfall cannot come now.

'8. Therefore, in the opinion of Dr. Beneš, it is not necessary for our people at home to be downcast. Uncertainty, apprehensions, fear of war and of further political, social and economic commotions are universal: in France, Britain and especially also in the totalitarian States. So far as the immediate future is concerned. Dr. Beneš does not expect any miracles, or any specially favourable surprises for us. But he thinks that, whatever happens, our State and Nation can *in the end* emerge stronger from its present difficult situation and future troubles with its chief injustices corrected even though, like the rest of Europe, it may have to undergo grave times of *occupation, unwanted war and social commotions.* Because it is politically more advanced and its social structure more balanced and because it is so mature, it will rise sooner from disorder than other Nations.'

* * *

After Munich, pressure from Berlin and the feigned or real indifference of the other European States to the fate of the Czech countries completely isolated the Prague Government. This deeply affected the feelings of all our people. Dejected by what had happened, the people felt themselves abandoned by the rest of the world and delivered into the hands of the Berlin bandits. The post-Munich Government in Prague therefore looked —rightly or wrongly—for some kind of *modus vivendi* with Nazi Berlin. Moreover, most of its members did not believe that war was really just at the gates. Dr. Chvalkovský expressed this belief with insultingly cynical scepticism. I myself did not consider the security guarantee which the Western Powers gave to Czechoslovakia during the Munich crisis to be wholly worthless. I imagined that Nazi Germany—in its own interest—would show a certain, even if small, degree of respect for this pledge. I did not expect that the Germans would try to occupy Czechoslovakia by force until the eve of a real war or after it had actually begun.

And as I believed that war would begin with an attack against Poland not sooner than in the summer of 1939, I hoped to the last that Czechoslovakia would be able to rise again, at least partially, and at once take part in that war on the side of Poland, France and Great Britain—in spite of all that had happened between us and them in 1938. I wanted to dedicate all my work abroad first and foremost to the preparations for this eventuality so that we could enter a second World War against Germany as a direct participant, as a State with a regular Government, which, if necessary, would in certain circumstances go abroad in good time and transfer at least part of our original Army to the territory of one of the neighbouring States. Too well did I know from the war of 1914–18 the Calvary of

winning step-by-step international recognition *ab initio* for a new revolutionary Government and State. I did not want us to have to go through this again in a new war. Unfortunately we did not escape having to do so because I had erred in a number of these assumptions and expectations. After systematic pressure from Berlin and a base, disruptive campaign—again carried out throughout the Republic with the help of our Germans—Hitler ordered Dr. Hácha and Minister Chvalkovský to Berlin on March 14th, 1939. In their political disorientation and through downright incapacity they allowed themselves to be forced by persuasions, threats and violence to sign a proclamation by which they placed the fate of the Czech Nation in Hitler's hands and tacitly recognised the separation of Slovakia which took place at that time. Hitler then used this declaration in his own way to establish the so-called Protectorate. But already on March 14th, 1939, before Hitler began these discussions with Dr. Emil Hácha in Berlin, the German forces had begun the invasion of Czechoslovakia which by that time was already nearly defenceless. One single regiment—the 8th Silesian regiment in Místek—valiantly attempted military resistance—without orders from Prague. Alas, this was the only attempt! The simultaneous journey of Tiso* to Hitler had already been treasonably prepared some time in advance. The separation of Slovakia and the act of treason against the Republic had been deliberately planned by some Slovak separatist leaders for months with the help of the Nazis and behind the back of Prague. Thus *with their full complicity* a Slovak protectorate was also established in those critical days.

I have no intention of occupying myself here in detail with what led up to March 15th. This is not one of the matters on which I could report to the Nation myself. The whole history of March 14th and 15th, 1939, was adequately disclosed and elucidated during the trial before the National Courts in Prague and Bratislava of the members of the so-called Czech Protectorate Government and the so-called Slovak Government which took place during the second half of 1946 and the beginning of 1947. And though, in 1939, I hesitated to draw final and definitive conclusions in public about what would happen at the end of this terrible crisis and war, one substantial and fundamental question on which my opinion never changed, nor will change, was already quite clear to me: in March, 1939, Dr. E. Hácha, our highest judge and lawyer, President of the State, and Dr. Chvalkovský, its Minister of Foreign Affairs, in their culpable political

*Monseigneur Dr. Tiso was subsequently President of the puppet Slovak State. After the war, he was arrested and hanged for treason in April, 1947, after a trial lasting over five months (Tr.).

narrowmindedness and ignorance *sacrificed the State both internationally and internally without having any right, authorisation or mandate to do so.* Tiso and his companions *at the same time deliberately committed base treason, infamously stabbing their own Nation in the back.* There are matters of law, and principles of political morality, which must not be *sacrificed at any price, not even for the sake of any supposed or real opportunistic political advantages whatsoever, nor under the most cruel threats and pressure.* For us, one such legal right and principle was, and is, our unified national State. A signature which surrendered the freedom of the State and accepted a Czech and Slovak Protectorate can be defended, justified or excused by nobody, by nothing and never.

The same is true of all our envoys and responsible diplomatic officials who were abroad, free and able to preserve the legal existence of the Republic but who either did not dare or failed to do so. It is true that the situation of our Legations was not everywhere the same. In some places it was easier—in countries where the Governments were anti-German and had the courage immediately to reject the violent action of Germany—in other places it was difficult and in a number of States wholly impossible. *If on the one hand, full credit is due to those who knew how to defend their offices and the interests of the Republic, then, on the other hand, those who failed in one or the other respect will have to answer for their actions* and explain their behaviour to our people and Government before the appropriate body which will be set up for this purpose.* The Nation has a right to know how its accredited representatives abroad behaved.

The guarantee given us by the Western Powers during the Munich crisis to compensate us for our temporary submission to force proved to be politically worthless on March 14th and 15th. *This was the second failure to honour a pledge and international obligation.* As a reason and excuse for this fresh non-observance of a freely accepted obligation, the first reaction of Paris and London after March 15th, 1939, was to cite the actions of our own citizens: Hácha's signature and Tiso's treason. This was only a very feeble and worthless excuse.

The whole outside world, including Paris and London, had no doubt that the Anglo-French undertaking to Czechoslovakia given when she accepted the Munich treaty, had again been broken. In particular, everybody saw that this was a new gangster crime of the typical Hitler variety, a new act of banditry, a new perjury. *So the Munich 'dictate' had been destroyed by its*

*Special Courts, known as 'People's Courts' were established after the war to deal with those who were accused of acts of commission or omission from the time of Munich onwards (Tr.).

own authors, through the non-observance of the solemn obligations which all four Great Powers had voluntarily undertaken, *had forced on us by irresistible pressure and then had themselves ignored.* In the whole history of mankind it is hard to find such a complete political fiasco—the fiasco of the whole Munich policy and 'appeasement' which collapsed when the truncated Czechoslovak Republic was forcibly occupied. But also in the whole history of Europe there is scarcely a precedent for such unprincipled behaviour by the Great Powers against a small friendly Nation which had done its utmost to fulfil its *own* obligations!

I remained in London till the end of January, 1939, intently watching international relations and events. Everything confirmed my conviction that Chamberlain's 'peace with honour' and 'peace for our time' were nothing more than totally illusory catch phrases. Meanwhile I was eagerly preparing my lectures for Chicago University and at the same time maintaining my underground connection with my country. My postal correspondence with friends at home was then so large that my brother Vojta Beneš—whom I met in London at Christmas, 1938, when he returned to Prague from the United States[6]—soon had to pass on to me a warning from the Prague Government that I should not aggravate its position and that I should stop it all. In London, meanwhile, I began to resume personal contact with some of my old friends and also with a number of old political acquaintances. I do not hesitate to say that all of them without exception—even if they did not always say so—showed embarrassment and shame at what had happened and what was still happening. French diplomacy had completely faded out after Munich and virtually did not exist. It continued to deceive itself and French public opinion by concluding a treacherous and fraudulent treaty with Germany which was signed in Paris by Ribbentrop on December 6th, 1938. British diplomacy was somewhat less reckless. Not wholly trusting Germany after the occupation of Prague and noting the subsequent steps against Poland, Great Britain negotiated an alliance with Poland which was announced in the House of Commons by Chamberlain on April 6th, 1939, and with Rumania and Greece, which he announced on April 13th, 1939.

Unfortunately, the actual military preparations of the two Great Powers for the steadily approaching war were of no great value—all the less so because they were accompanied by discussions for a fresh credit and economic agreement with Germany on March 15th, 1939, carried on by the President of the Board of Trade, Mr. Hudson. All the European dictatorships, Beck's in Poland, Metaxas's in Greece, Carol's in Rumania were to be helped. We are glad they got it and do not grudge it to them

in the least. We simply remember with bitter irony that, only a short time before, it had been thought necessary for the Republic of Masaryk alone to be sacrificed to Hitler to purchase a few months of apparent peace with the result that all the smaller States of Europe had become gravely demoralised!

I announced that my university lectures in Chicago would start in February, 1939 and I made preparations accordingly for my departure to America. As I was almost certain that the general European crisis would begin about, and in any case not later than, the end of the summer, I booked a return passage on the ship in which we were leaving for America. At the end of January I was ready to leave for the United States.

My wife, Bohuš Beneš and I went on board the American ship *George Washington* at Portsmouth on February 2nd, 1939, for our voyage over the Atlantic. I finished my university lectures on the ship and considered the plan for my whole work in the United States. In America, as in London, I wanted to move very cautiously at the start. But what happened when I reached New York changed this plan considerably. Even before our arrival in New York harbour I was surrounded by a number of interviewers and journalists from New York. I was almost forced to speak on the American radio from the ship and to my surprise the police and civic authorities took me straight from the ship to the City Hall, to Mayor La Guardia.

And here was a fresh surprise: we were cheered by crowds of people in the streets, in the packed City Hall where La Guardia welcomed us in an emotional speech on the theme: 'Four representatives of two decadent European democracies and two violent dictatorships meeting at Munich decided that instead of politics they would perform common butchery. They laid a small, fettered State on their operating table and then with merciless treachery began to cut it up. Today we welcome the President of this State in New York. We assure him that we have not forgotten this act of butchery by the European Great Powers, that we value him according to his merits and that therefore here in the United States we will always assist his brave Nation. And we declare that this Nation will soon again rise to freedom and that its President will again return to his liberated country.'

This speech caused immediate excitement and on the next day alarm in the press. I saw that, if I wanted to carry out my original plan, it would not be possible to stay long in New York. Such a reception had encouraged us very much, but on the other hand it had for the time being made things difficult for me because I had to answer in the same or similar vein and that

was not my exact intention. I therefore went on to Chicago as soon as I could. But there, too, we received much the same kind of welcome—especially from our compatriots.

I hurried through these demonstrations during the first few days of my stay in Chicago and then withdrew into greater privacy, preferring to invite important people one at a time and explain to them in detail the impressions, opinions and plans with which I had come from Europe. Then I contacted the University more closely, met its President, R. Hutchins, and a number of other colleagues (professors Quincy Wright, Ch. Merriam, Bernadotte Schmitt, Harper and others), all of whom showed great interest and real friendship. Then I began my university lectures.

While I was in London I had already accepted a number of offers to lecture at various universities as well as to important societies and organisations, political and non-political institutions, scientific and learned societies. All these lectures dealt with such problems as European democracy and its development, European dictatorships, social and economic conditions, questions of peace and war in Europe. For the time being I refused to speak about Munich. But such lectures gave me sufficient opportunity to stress the dangers of European developments, to warn that war was coming, to assess the harmful nature of European diplomacy and to show how fatal was the road along which the world had been travelling since Munich.

I remained in Chicago from the beginning of February until July, 1939. During this time my lecture tour took me right across North America from West to East and from North to South. I visited and lectured at all the important universities. A number of universities offered me honorary degrees, a number of others tried to tempt me to leave Chicago University. My wife and I visited the birthplaces or graves of George Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Wilson and wherever we went there were huge meetings and demonstrations at which not seldom ten, fifteen, even twenty thousand people took part. It was an immense work of propaganda for peace, democracy and Czechoslovakia; against what had happened in Munich. Only then I did fully understand how great were the moral assets which the Republic had built up during the twenty years of our existence and during our fight for democracy in 1938 by our faith in and fidelity to Masaryk's democracy, our endeavour to save peace, our dignified attitude towards Germany and Nazism. I confess to have made the fullest use of these moral and political assets during my six months in North America.

The fact that I had settled in Chicago—almost in the centre of the

United States—and that I had accepted a professorship at the university, won me access to the scientific and learned circles of the United States and was of real importance. At the same time it meant that I was right in the centre of the life of our compatriots* which automatically enabled me to help them towards a correct orientation during the coming war.

Next to the Munich period, this was one of the most active and at the same time one of the most fatiguing periods of my political life. But the moment war began, it bore the richest fruit in every direction. I would never have believed that all classes of the American population could show so much real interest in us and that such true selfless sympathy would be shown to a small State crushed by the policy of Munich.

There would be no end to telling all our experiences and how day after day in all American circles our hopes were revived and we were encouraged to fight for the liberty of our country: among scholars and scientists and in ǝɥ universities, among workers and in other political circles, in the churches and religious centres, in social and economic organisations—the least they demanded was to hear my authentic views of what to expect in the immediate future—in the expert political circles of the two leading political parties, Democrats and Republicans, and last but not least in all official circles.

All this pointed to one conclusion: *in such conditions our cause cannot be lost and if within a measurable space of time a conflict in Europe should arise*—and it surely will—*we must do all in our power to win these great moral and political forces in the United States to the side of the victory of our truth*† *and never lose them again !*

2. *First Consequences of March 15th—Protests to the Powers and the League of Nations*

March 15th, 1939, which found me already in the United States, was, above all, a new and very hard blow for Great Britain and France, both morally and materially. Munich and the blunders of the Munich policy cost no other countries more dearly than it did these two States—unless it were Poland and Yugoslavia. I believe that in the final analysis it was more costly to them than to Czechoslovakia. In spite of the injustice which had been committed against us by nearly all the world, we had kept our honour and our rights and claims morally intact! We had warned the

*About a third of the 1,500,000 people of Czech and Slovak origin in the United States live in Chicago (Tr.).

†The motto of the Czechoslovak Republic is: 'Truth prevails'. (Tr.).

whole world in time, officially and with the greatest emphasis, and we had mobilised our armed forces twice for our defence!

Alas, we had remained deserted and totally isolated in the hands of our ferocious and barbarous enemy.*

But the occupation of Prague was the real beginning of the second World War —March 15th, 1939, had to lead to it in the end. In spite of the desperate and pusillanimous efforts of official Paris and London, the world could not remain silent any more. And the weight of the war—which had been delayed by such dreadful (moral and material) sacrifices—was to be borne first and foremost by Paris and London!

At that time I was already in Chicago and beginning to lecture at the University. I got the first news of these tragic happenings on the morning of March 15th. It was a terrible blow for me: the whole foundation of my further plans in case of war had been already destroyed in time of peace. Independence, statehood, unity with the Slovaks, all seemed to be lost. The Germans in our country were masters everywhere and of everything! And the uncertainty about what the rest of the world, our people at home, our representatives abroad would do! And above all: what would happen if Hitler should delay the next blow against Poland and we would have to wait for years for the general war against Germany? Would our people at home hold out in that hell? Would they remain strong in their resistance and morally untouched?

What a dreadful prospect!

I considered for a long time what to do next. I could think of nobody else who in this moment should and could raise his voice in protest and act freely in the name of the Nation except the second President of the Republic who from this moment was truly in exile and who, through what had just happened at home, was again quite free to speak and act. By Hitler's crime, by this fresh British and French failure to keep their pledged word and by Hácha's signature to the protectorate I felt freed from all earlier obligations which I had temporarily imposed myself and from all that I had been forced to take part in by violence and pressure since September 19th, 1938. All these ceased to operate! The so-called *First Republic again existed legally!* And its voice had to make itself heard at whatever price!

This finally was my decision.

In this sense—though at that moment such things could not be spoken

*This is a tacit refutation of the Soviet Government's assertion that it had offered help which Dr. Beneš had refused. When this book was published in Prague, President Beneš was not able to speak openly on this subject (Tr.).

of fully and openly—I sent telegrams on March 16th to President Roosevelt, Prime Ministers Chamberlain and Daladier, to Maxim Litvinov and the President of the League of Nations' Council. I advocated the point of view that I had a right to send these protests because, as the second legally elected President of the Czechoslovak Republic, I had been forced by German violence to resign my office and to go into exile in defiance of right, justice and the Constitution and also because the events themselves prevented any other real and unfettered representative of the Czechoslovak State and Nation from taking action.

The telegram which was sent on the morning of March 16th, 1939, read as follows:

'The Czech and Slovak people are victims of a great international crime. The people of Czechoslovakia cannot protest today and because of the happenings of the last month cannot defend themselves. Therefore I as ex-President of Czechoslovakia, address this solemn protest to you:

'Last September, the Franco-British proposals and a few days afterwards, the Munich decision, were presented to me. Both these documents contained the promise of the guarantee of the integrity and security of Czechoslovak territory. Both these documents asked for unheard-of sacrifices by my people in the interest of European peace—these sacrifices were made by the people of Czechoslovakia.

'Nevertheless, one of the Great Powers which signed the Agreement of Munich is now dividing our territory, is occupying it with its army and is establishing a "protectorate" under threat of force and military violence.

'Before the conscience of the world and before history I am obliged to proclaim that the Czechs and Slovaks will never accept this unbearable imposition on their sacred rights. And they will never cease their struggle until these rights are reinstated for their beloved country. And I entreat your Government to refuse to recognise this crime and to assume the consequences which today's tragic situation in Europe and in the world urgently requires.

'I am also sending this telegram to the President of the Council of the League of Nations referring to the relevant articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, especially Article 10. I am convinced that no Member of the League of Nations will recognise this crime, and I hope that all Members of the League will in due time fulfil their obligations arising out of the Covenant.'[1]

Three days later—on March 19th, 1939—I made my broadcast speech to the American Nation from Chicago University which had asked me to do

so from its platform. In this address I gave a short survey of the September (1938) crisis and declared among other things:

'Five months ago at the time of the so-called September crisis, pressure was exercised on Czechoslovakia to make an unheard-of sacrifice of its territory in the interest of peace. Irresistible pressure was exercised on our people not to fight for their liberty, independence and territorial integrity and thereby to save all the rest of the world from war. General pressure was brought against this small State to sacrifice itself for the peace of the world. And this people really sacrificed themselves. In return they got an assurance and a guarantee that the integrity of what remained of their national territory would be maintained. This small Nation made the sacrifice—as is well known—under pressure of the Munich decision to which it submitted only because four European Great Powers had signed in Munich an obligation to guarantee the security of the new State.

'But in spite of all these sacrifices, of all this self-restraint, in spite of all promises and guarantees by the Powers which had solemnly signed the Munich Agreement and in spite of Germany's promise to make no further territorial demands in Europe; in spite of the fact that by the Munich treaty and its consequences more than 1,200,000 citizens of Czechoslovak nationality had come within the boundaries of foreign States, the German Government has brutally violated its promises and obligations, invaded Czechoslovak territory, established a so-called protectorate and its rule of terror, secret police, political and religious hatred and persecution and the system of concentration camps, and after suppressing all freedom of the press, of speech and conscience and after establishing its Government of violence and inhumanity in this way, it has cynically claimed to have done all this in the name of peace in Europe.

'But I beg you not to forget that the events about which I am speaking do not concern Europe alone nor the nations of Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. They concern France and Britain, too, the Scandinavian Nations and also the United States. Nor is this all: the whole world is not only in danger of war but also in danger of the extermination of all concepts of real human morality, freedom, honour and decency. This is what is at stake ! A society which goes on tolerating this state of affairs will be annihilated and will disappear.'

After declaring that the State, the Czechoslovak Republic, continued legally to exist, that German brutality could not annihilate it, I concluded as follows:

'I am convinced that my Nation, going through this fight courageously and proudly as ever in the past, will come out of it victoriously with the sympathy, appreciation and love of all the decent people of the world on its side. It has done so several times in its troubled history and there is no place more apt for this declaration of mine than the free country of Washington and Lincoln.'*

In the morning of March 17th—a day after I had sent my telegram of protest to President Roosevelt from Chicago—Under-Secretary of State, Sumner Welles made an official statement which was announced to me early in the morning of the same day by telephone from Washington. In this he declared that:

*The full English text of this address is not available. But the following additional extract is of interest:

'Do not believe that it was a question of self-determination for a minority. From the beginning it has been a battle for the existence of the State. A dictatorship cannot tolerate freedom. A dictatorship can permit no liberty, no freedom, no democracy in its vicinity. It was and is and will be a battle for existence by a free Nation opposed by a totalitarian State which denies freedom. The latest move of the German dictatorship in the occupation of Czechoslovakia proves it.

'This last tragic event must now finally open the eyes of the whole world to the fact that the Czechoslovak Nation was from its beginning condemned by the dictators. With the subjugation of Czechoslovakia, freedom is being guillotined. And nobody in the United States or in the world should forget that the regime which is now attempting to kill freedom in Czechoslovakia is based on these three groups of conceptions:

'First of all, the regime does not recognise any obligations unless it is expedient for it to do so; it will fulfil no promise; it will respect no law; it will keep no pledge; it will show no tolerance, either political or religious; it will admit no right to property either of State or of individuals unless it considers it expedient to do so. And for every crime against human decency it will always discover a pretext.

'Second, the only principle on which this regime is based is the rule of force and violence. This regime can maintain no respect for the idea of right. It preaches that the only right is might—force and violence. If you look back through the pages of history you will find that this is the system which was always termed the age of barbarism. Today it would rule the world as the age of brute force.

'The third basis of this regime is the simple use of the old slogan "the end justifies the means". And in their minds that end means one thing only—the success of their rule of brute force, which is combined with the propaganda of lies which they have elaborated both internally and internationally as a weapon, and as a most important factor in maintaining this regime, and in deceiving the world as to their real intent.

'This whole theory has been made into a State system, a system which today undertakes to subjugate Czechoslovakia, a system which has begun to rule throughout my country and which tomorrow will extend its terrorism still farther.

'And the people of the United States and of what remains of free Europe must be prepared for a continuation and extension of this rule of brute force.'

'The Government of the United States has on frequent occasions stated its conviction that only through international support of a programme of order based upon law can world peace be assured.

'This Government, founded upon and dedicated to the principles of human liberty and of democracy, cannot refrain from making known this country's condemnation of the acts which have resulted in the temporary extinguishment of a free and independent people with whom, from the day when the Republic of Czechoslovakia attained its independence, the people of the United States have maintained especially close and friendly relations.

'It is manifest that acts of wanton lawlessness and of arbitrary force are threatening world peace and the very structure of modern civilisation.

'The imperative need for observance of the principles advocated by this Government has been clearly demonstrated by the developments which have taken place during the past three days.'

The Government of the United States included this declaration in its official Note of March 20th, sent to the German Chargé d'Affaires, refusing to accept the German Note of March 17th, 1939, which announced to the Government of the United States the establishment of a German Protectorate in Bohemia and Moravia.

On March 27th, President Roosevelt sent the following letter in answer to my telegram:

'DEAR DR. BENEŠ,

I have received your telegram of March 16th, 1939, regarding the tragic events of last week in Central Europe. I have followed these happenings with deep concern. While the Government of the United States has observed that the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia have been occupied by German military authorities and are now under the *de facto* administration of German authorities, it has not recognised the legal status of that situation. I need hardly add that I deeply sympathise with the Czechoslovak people in the unfortunate circumstances in which for the time being they find themselves.

Very sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.'

Chamberlain answered on March 20th in a short telegram in which he referred to the fact that he had expressed the view of His Majesty's Government on the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in his speech at Birmingham on March 17th, 1939. On March 18th, Maxim Litvinov sent to the Czechoslovak Minister in Moscow a copy of the Soviet Note which

had been delivered on the same day to the German Ambassador. In this Note he very decidedly rejected the whole of Nazi Germany's activities against Czechoslovakia.[9] From Daladier—in conformity with what had become his 'established tradition' in Czechoslovak affairs—there was no answer.

The British and French Governments answered the German Notes announcing the establishment of a German Protectorate in the Czech countries and in Slovakia only after the first step had been taken by the United States. Their official Notes, dated March 18th, rejected the German action and proceedings as contrary to the principles of international law and signed treaties.[10] The British answer stated expressly that H.M. Government were forced to consider the events of the past days to be a clear violation of the Munich Agreement and of the spirit in which the signatories of this Agreement had engaged themselves to co-operate for the peaceful solution of all European questions. The Note protested also against the changes carried out in Czechoslovakia by the military action of Germany and declared that in the opinion of the British Government these changes were lacking in any legal foundation whatsoever.[11]

Immediately after these events we agreed with Jan Masaryk and Envoy Vladimír Hurban on the next step. Soon after Munich, Masaryk had resigned from his office as Czechoslovak Minister in London. Just then he was on a lecturing tour in the United States and after the March events, with my approval, he immediately returned to London to work there. Meanwhile in London, K. Lisický, Counsellor of the Legation, Colonel Kalla, and Dr. Jan Gerke, Secretary of the Legation, in conjunction with the Foreign Office, had in critical days and under difficult conditions saved our Legation and had immediately reported this fact to us in Chicago. Afterwards, until the end of the war, Masaryk had the greatest and most successful share in our common resistance activity in Great Britain and America where he knew better than anybody else both the conditions and the people with influence. He did great service there for our national cause.

Vladimír Hurban, the Czechoslovak Minister in Washington, very decidedly and with the right political perception of the whole situation, refused to deliver the Washington Legation to the Nazi authorities on March 16th. He came at once to Chicago to visit me and placed himself and his office at the disposal of the second President of the Republic for the continuation of the fight. During all this crisis and also later on during the war he carried on his work in the United States very efficiently and successfully, truly patriotically and in faithfulness to the Republic regardless of all consequences. Working very devotedly with him and afterwards with

me were Dr. J. Papánek, the second loyal and unyielding Slovak in America, our Consul in Pittsburgh, and many others. In Chicago we immediately established the first provisional political centre of resistance which for the time being we called 'Action Abroad'.

Soon afterwards the leading representatives of the American Czechs and Slovaks in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and in Texas—the greatest part of the Czechoslovak community in the United States—began, with our approval and within the framework of their legal obligations as American citizens, to concentrate all the endeavours of their central organisations in America in support of the new movement for the liberation of Czechoslovakia. They appealed to me to take the leadership of the second resistance liberation at once.[12] In London, Paris, Poland, Moscow and a number of other places similar movements began to form, too—spontaneously or prompted by us.

The organised work of the second resistance movement had begun.

From April, 1939, onward we gradually succeeded in uniting our main forces and organisations in the United States and Canada. We also immediately contacted most of the Czechoslovak diplomatic and consular missions—as many as had survived—and tried to unite for the approaching European war everything that had remained of the Czechoslovak State apparatus abroad in all other States.[13] From the United States—via London, Paris and Belgrade—we also established new and better connections with our country—connections, which, by the way, were never interrupted afterwards—and we urged *that the greatest possible number of soldiers and officers should go abroad without delay*. In particular, and in reply to an inquiry from home, I agreed to the coming of Generals Sergěj Ingr and Rudolf Viest.* Our political functionaries in Paris, who had their own connection with our homeland, were sending similar requests to their contacts at home.

An event of exceptional importance for us was the fact that a whole group of officers of the Czechoslovak military intelligence service in the Ministry of National Defence escaped from Prague to London with the principal part of their working material on the eve of the Nazi occupation. All these officers placed themselves at my disposal in a letter sent to

*General Ingr afterwards became Commander-in-Chief of the Czechoslovak Forces in Great Britain. After the war he was retired and became Minister at The Hague. After the Communist *coup d'état* in February, 1948, he remained abroad. General Viest was parachuted into Slovakia at the time of Slovak rising in 1944. He was captured by the Germans and declarations made by him after his capture suggest that he thought he had been betrayed by the Russians. He was later released by the Americans who rejected the Czechoslovak Government's request to hand him over for trial as a collaborator (Tr.).

Chicago shortly after their arrival in London (March 14th, 1939). Later, under Colonel Fr. Moravec, they were to maintain an extremely active and never-interrupted contact with our country. Their work for the common cause began at once in co-operation with the British, and later with the French, Army. We considered the new status in Czechoslovakia after March 15th to be legally a state of war between Czechoslovakia and Germany. So we immediately began to work and fight against the bandits who had invaded our country.

On May 23rd the Council of the League of Nations met in Geneva for the first time after the German invasion of Czechoslovakia. I availed myself of this opportunity to register a second solemn protest against the German occupation. On May 13th I sent from Pittsburgh, where I had arrived on a lecturing tour, identical telegrams to the General Secretary of the League of Nations, J. Avenol, and to the Foreign Ministers of the three European Great Powers which were members of the Council of the League—Lord Halifax, G. Bonnet and V. Molotov. The text of the protest was:

'On March 16th after the military invasion of Czechoslovakia by Germany I sent you a declaration of protest and asked you to lay this protest before the President of the Council so that the proper steps could be taken in this matter. In view of the fact that the Council of the League of Nations is about to meet I beg to repeat this request adding at the same time this further protest:

'In consequence of the military invasion of Czechoslovakia and the establishment of a so-called German protectorate over the Bohemian and Moravian provinces, and over Slovakia, the Hungarian Government has occupied by force and at variance with its earlier obligations part of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia and has forced the State and local authorities which owing to the crippling of Czechoslovakia were unable to resist successfully to consent to the occupation of the whole territory of Subcarpathian Ruthenia and part of Eastern Slovakia.

'In view of the fact that the principal Articles of the Covenant of the League of Nations as well as the commonly recognised principles of international law have thus been violated so shamelessly, in view of the fact that the Council of the League of Nations has been entrusted, by a special treaty guaranteeing local autonomy to Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the framework of the Czechoslovak Republic, with the supervision of the accomplishment of this guarantee—a right and duty accepted by the Council of the League of Nations and accomplished successfully and conscientiously for twenty years—in view of the fact that not only the

rights of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Subcarpathian people but also the rights and duties of the Council of the League of Nations have thus been illegally destroyed and that this use of force must not be tolerated by any member of the League if a fresh humiliation of the League is not to ensue, and in view of the fact that this is a new blow directed at the League's existence, I am addressing myself to the President of the Council in my function as former President of the Czechoslovak Republic with the respectful request that this new crime against international law should not remain unnoticed and that with regard to the violated articles of the Treaty the matter should be put before the Council so that the necessary steps may be undertaken.

'I would like to add, that Czechoslovakia, *though legally continuing to exist*, has at present—in view of the fact of its being subjected to a rule of oppression and violence—no possibility to maintain its rights fully in Geneva. Therefore I hope it will be permitted to the former President of the Czechoslovak Republic who in the name of Czechoslovakia has co-operated with the League of Nations for seventeen years, who is devoted to the cause of maintaining and consolidating international peace and who has been elected President of the Assembly and on many occasions President of the Council of the League, to appeal to the Council asking not only for the protection of the rights of Czechoslovakia but also for protection of the rights of the League of Nations.

Dr. Eduard Beneš,

Professor of Chicago University.'

At the first confidential meeting of the Council of the League of Nations, M. Avenol announced that my telegram had arrived at Geneva. But he refused to have it officially discussed in the Council on the ground that the protest had been submitted in an irregular manner, that is to say, not by the Czechoslovak or another Government, but by a 'private individual'. The majority of the Council accepted this seemingly legal, but extremely unjust and humiliating point of view which was contrary to the spirit of the Covenant and especially to the rights and duties of the League of Nations. This was undoubtedly a case which fundamentally concerned the League of Nations itself, especially the Hungarian occupation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia of which the Geneva institution was co-guarantor. But the Soviet Ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, acting on instructions from Moscow, told the meeting that in these circumstances the Soviet Government accepted the duty of submitting the protest to the League itself. The General Secretary was thus forced to place the Czechoslovak protest before the Council of the League for regular discussion.

In consequence of this discussion, our protest was to have come before the Council and Assembly of the League of Nations in September, 1939. But by September the European situation had completely changed. Germany had invaded Poland. Great Britain and France had declared war on Germany with all the consequences these events entailed. Finally the Soviet-German treaty was also signed. So neither the occupation of Czechoslovakia nor any of these new great events were ever discussed at all in Geneva. By then, the League of Nations was already lapsing into helplessness.

Immediately the Germans occupied our country, thousands of our officers and soldiers began to escape from Czechoslovakia going first to Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Turkey, etc., and thence to France. Our Paris Legation negotiated an agreement with the French Government which enabled our soldiers temporarily to enter the Foreign Legion so that in the event of war they could become the nucleus of an independent Czechoslovak Army which would be the legal continuation of the Czechoslovak Army at home. So all our *military* preparations were automatically centred on Paris.

At the same time there were preparations for special Czechoslovak military action in Poland under our Legation in Warsaw and our Consulate in Cracow in collaboration with General L. Prchala and other Czechoslovak officers who had succeeded in crossing the frontier into Poland in time. According to our global plan they were to be part of our political and military organisation in London and Paris. When the tension between Poland and Germany increased, General Sergěj Ingr from London and General Prchala in Warsaw tried to come to an agreement with the Polish Government. But even in those moments so full of fate for both Poland and ourselves the Polish Government was clearly determined to continue Colonel Beck's policy against Czechoslovakia and was boycotting our resistance movement in Western Europe and me personally. It would negotiate only with those of our people who declared themselves to be opposed to me and who offered a prospect of standing for a future policy which would almost have made us tributary to Poland. Accordingly, after the German invasion of Poland had begun on September 3rd, 1939, and after preliminary discussions with some of our political and military functionaries (chiefly with General Prchala), the Polish President issued a decree in Warsaw in which he agreed to the establishment of 'Czech' and 'Slovak' (not Czechoslovak) legions on Polish territory as parts of the *Polish* army. Without reference to us, General L. Prchala was then charged by *Polish military authorities* with the organisation of these legions.[14]

Meanwhile, after the Germans occupied Prague, the number of our political workers who began to assemble in Paris, London and the United States for the fight for the liberation of Czechoslovakia was growing daily and it was further strengthened by refugees who succeeded in escaping to Poland, Yugoslavia or Rumania. Among them were former ministers, deputies, senators, professors and especially officers and soldiers as well as the envoys and officials of those of our legations and consulates which had not been handed over to the Germans and the members of which were gradually reporting for the fight against Germany.

I have already mentioned that we had decided in Chicago on the first extensive and systematically organised action which should be taken against Germany when war broke out. Another important resolution of our American compatriots in this direction followed between April 18th and 20th, 1939, at a conference of the chief Czech and Slovak organisations in America—the Czech National Association, the Slovak National Association, and the Association of Czech Catholics—which met in Chicago and resolved to combine their forces for a new fight in a new joint organisation, the *Czechoslovak National Council of America*. Under the chairmanship of Professor J. Zmrhal they immediately afterwards offered their devoted and patriotic support to our liberation movement in so far as was compatible with the law and their duties as citizens of the United States. This was the first, speedy and successful beginning of the work of our American compatriots. Within one single month from March 15th, we had accomplished the unification of our main forces in America. In the first World War it had taken not months but years for this stage to be reached.

Our first and foremost task was to give our people some fundamental concepts for their fight against Germany—a programme which would be the basis of our whole fight. This was accomplished at the meeting of American citizens of Czechoslovak descent held in Chicago on June 8th, 1939, at the suggestion of our American Legionaries of World War I. War had not yet begun and American public opinion, as well as official Government circles, was very sensitive about acts which could be interpreted as agitation for war or for any other form of conflict with the totalitarian dictatorships. I had therefore to be extremely reserved and cautious in my remarks.

Nevertheless, even at that meeting I was able to say at least the most urgent things. I stressed that it would be a grave error to look at the events in Czechoslovakia which followed the Munich crisis and the German occupation without also having regard to what had happened and was

happening all over the world. The European politicians had failed to assess the consequences of the development which began in 1932 when first Germany, later Italy and finally Japan definitely decided to annihilate the Peace of Versailles. What happened to us in 1938-39 was only the beginning and a small item among these consequences which were still going on and would continue to do so.

But, I went on, we were not bound by the Munich 'Diktat' and we had not and would not recognise the German occupation. We did not accept the Vienna arbitration award which took away further territory from us and which Hungary had recklessly violated as soon as it suited her. We did not and would not recognise March 14th and 15th: I pointed out in this connection that the occupation of the Republic on March 15th had not been recognised by any country except some of Germany's most intimate allies. *The Czechoslovak Republic therefore legally continued to exist*, and our international rights and obligations as between other States and ourselves were also still valid.

I further stressed that we could regard all this as constituting *a substantial legal basis for our struggle*;[15] that the negotiations before or after March 15th between Berlin and Prague which led to the establishment of the Protectorate over Czech and Slovak territory lacked any legal basis as they had been forced on us by violence and barbaric threats. The acts in question were simply acts against the Constitution, against the laws and were legally invalid because no representative of the so-called Second Republic had been authorized to perform them.

At the end of my speech I addressed a few special words to the Slovaks—whose compatriots at home had been cut off from the Czechs by the machinations of Hitler and the treacherous Tiso Government. I stressed that this too was treasonable, unconstitutional and illegal and that *we therefore regarded it as invalid.*

On this basis, I concluded, we would begin the fight for the liberation of our State and Nation. From this, we would draw all the legal and political conclusions!

3. *My Conversation with Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Before I left the United States, I visited Washington and, on May 28th, 1939, had a long conversation with President F. D. Roosevelt.

Our discussions came about in a peculiar manner. At the end of April, 1939, in Chicago I received a visit from an old friend from World War I, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, editor of the review *Foreign Affairs* and at that

time President Roosevelt's regular adviser in matters of foreign policy. He was also the author of a good and analytically written book on the events which led to Munich.[16] He and I discussed the situation in Europe and when I had explained my views about the further course of events he insisted that I should go to see President Roosevelt as soon as possible. He offered to arrange a meeting. Some days later he told me in Chicago that I would shortly be received by Roosevelt in the President's private summer home and that for the time being this fact should remain entirely confidential.

I readily followed Armstrong's directions and Roosevelt then fixed May 28th, 1939, for the meeting. I was to go for lunch and the afternoon to Hyde Park some 70 kms. north of New York. I was accompanied by my American secretary, Ed. B. Hitchcock, the former European correspondent of *The Christian Science Monitor* of Boston. We stayed with Roosevelt for about three and a half hours during which time I had one of my most important conversations of post-Munich times. I had already met Roosevelt in World War I, when he was Under-Secretary of the Navy and in 1919 I negotiated with him the use of American ships for the repatriation of our soldiers from Siberia. He now showed himself to be an educated and far-sighted politician extraordinarily well-informed on world problems and on questions of European policy as well as on the general bearing of the Munich crisis. He was also very well informed on the whole about questions concerning the Soviet Union. He knew and understood its chief problems and, in particular, had long ago realised that it was absolutely necessary to solve the problem of bringing the Soviet Union into the framework of international policy if world peace was to be advanced and if the dictatorial regimes in Europe were to be defeated. Holding this point of view, he looked very critically on the France of Daladier and the Great Britain of Chamberlain. He saw very clearly why these two countries had decided to follow the policy of 'appeasement' and then of Munich. He rejected this uncompromisingly. Especially he condemned their impossibly opportunistic and undemocratic behaviour towards our country.

Roosevelt received me most cordially, greeted me as the President of the Republic and added that for him there was no Munich so that to him I was still the President. I saw at once that I could speak quite frankly and with full confidence. The conversation which followed was a determining factor in the framing of the whole of my future policy during the war. We spoke first of Munich. He asked me a number of questions. He wanted to know many details and some of the personal factors. He stressed

especially that we had done well not to let ourselves be provoked into war with Hitler in the circumstances which existed in 1938. He considered that we would have suffered dreadfully. Western Europe did not want to help and America could not have done so. If the Soviet Union had intervened alone, he was not at all sure in the political conditions of those times how the whole affair would have ended.* Neither Western Europe nor America were in any sense prepared for the conflict either morally or materially. Indeed, Hitler would perhaps have attained his final goal more easily and sooner—at least temporarily.[17]

Then followed the most dramatic part of the conversation. Roosevelt asked me directly:

'Tell me frankly how you envisage the possible course of the political situation in Europe and how you think events will progressively develop.'

'War in Europe is to be expected already this year,' I replied. 'In my judgment it may break out any day after July 15th. Hitler is preparing for war very intensively and wants it. He will most certainly provoke it.'

'My military experts expect it later—not before the harvest has finished. But how do you imagine that Hitler will start the war?'

'Undoubtedly by an attack on Poland.'

'What will be its course?'

'War with Poland will move very fast. It will be a real "Blitzkrieg." Within two weeks the Germans will be in Warsaw and the whole Polish campaign will not last more than six weeks.'

The President expressed astonishment that I should take such a pessimistic view of the Polish capacity to resist. I justified my attitude by my knowledge of the thorough preparations of the German dictatorship and the total unpreparedness, lack of seriousness and empty megalomania of the Polish dictatorship which I had observed very clearly during the Munich crisis. I argued further that all Germans would march with enthusiasm against Poland. Against us this would not yet have been the case—some were still hesitating. And it would then have been easier for Western Europe too, because the Soviet Union would have intervened at the same time.

'And how do you envisage the further course of events?'

'Britain and France will be in the war. But this will not prevent the fall of Poland, because they too are insufficiently prepared. But Belgium and the Netherlands will also be involved in the war, and it seems Switzerland as well. That at least, is what I hear from Europe—direct from Germany.'

*The Soviet Union's treaty obligations to help Czechoslovakia only became operative if France acted too (Tr.).

My opinion was based partly on earlier reports about Hitler's plans, his concept of the 'Blitzkrieg' and his views about political and military morale and partly on direct reports received from Europe during the preceding weeks.

'And then?'

'It is necessary to reckon with the fact that after Czechoslovakia and Poland all other Central European States as far as Greece will also fall. Hitler will thus come face to face with the Soviet Union. His real objective is the Ukraine and the definite pushing back of the Soviet Union as far as possible to the East. I am fully confident that Great Britain will oppose this. What will happen in France, I cannot say. But I hope that in the end France, too, will pull itself together for real resistance.'

'What do you think the Soviet Union will do?'

'In the end it too will enter the war.'

'On whose side?'

'Of course, on *our* side. War between the Soviet Union and Germany is sooner or later quite inevitable. This springs necessarily from the Nazi and the Communist ideologies, from Hitler's conception of German national interests, from his concrete plans and from the character of the people who are in power in Germany.'

The President agreed. But then he asked me a number of questions about the Soviet Union: Whether the Soviet Union would be able to fight; whether its army and especially the Soviet officers' corps were in good shape—as to this he said he had a number of contradictory reports—whether the Soviet war industry and communications were functioning properly and whether they had enough technical equipment, etc.

I gave Roosevelt a long account of my experiences in the Soviet Union during my journey in 1935 including what I had seen myself and what had been reported to me in pre-Munich days by our soldiers about its latest preparations. I ended by expressing my opinion that it would be a *long* war, an all-in war, a really horrible war.

Roosevelt commented on my remarks and rounded them off with a series of comments and views of his own, based partly on information he had received and partly on his own experiences especially on the talks he had had with various Soviet representatives including Litvinov who, as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, had visited him during the negotiations in Washington for the normalisation of Soviet-American relations.

In the end we reached the most delicate question of all: what would the United States do? The President asked my opinion and I answered frankly:

'I think the United States will also have to enter the war in any case. Europe alone cannot win the war against Hitler. And even if the United States does not enter the fight against Nazism, Nazism will attack the United States. It is necessary not to forget that in Hitler and his companions, the rest of the world is up against real madmen who are out of their minds and capable of anything. Besides, the decay of the Western democracies has gone so far that, without the help of America, Western Europe cannot be rescued from present-day Germany.'

'How do you think America could help?' asked Roosevelt ultimately.

'Europe will need the unconditional help of your great financial aid. It will also need your industry, supplies of arms and ammunition, food and, of course, your ships. It cannot manage without these. I cannot say whether it will be also necessary to send soldiers. I do not know. I hope that perhaps they will not be needed.'

Finally we turned to our Czechoslovak affairs. I explained to the President that immediately war broke out I intended to establish a political and military organisation from our refugees, emigrants and all those who would be leaving our country. I said that at the proper moment I intended to establish an Army and a Provisional Government and thus to repeat in a new form what we had done in the First World War under the leadership of Masaryk. I added that at the outset our greatest difficulty would be the question of how to finance the whole movement.[18] I ended this lengthy explanation with the statement that when the question of recognising our revolutionary Government arose, I would turn for help to the President himself. And I added that I hoped my request would not be refused.

The President asked me to give him the chief points of my exposé in writing. He expressed the hope that events would take a satisfactory course and said:

'We have helped you once. We will help you again. Do remain in contact with me and let me know how your affairs progress.'

Then he asked for more detailed information of the circumstances in which the Masaryk Government had been recognised by the United States in World War I.

I left Roosevelt with the conviction that he fully understood the whole problem of the approaching war crisis in Europe; that he was aware of the part which the United States would necessarily be called upon to play; that he understood the problem of the two European dictatorships and also the position of the Soviet Union. From various allusions, especially while he was telling me in some detail of his talks with Litvinov, I realised that he was also aware of the universal social crisis which would inevitably

spring from a new war and why therefore the Western democracies of Europe were afraid to go to war against Hitler at the side of the Soviet Union. Finally, I was sure that he would help us in every way he could.

As I have already said, this conversation was decisive—it contributed to the forming of my whole future policy which I built up from the beginning of World War II and during its progress. Before I left the President I again thanked him for the American attitude after the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia and asked him to maintain the same attitude in the future whatever might happen in Europe. I then ended the discussion by asking the President of the United States these three concrete questions:

(*a*) Can I take it for granted that the Government of the United States believes in the possibility of re-establishing an independent Czechoslovakia and that it intends to direct its future policy to this end?

(*b*) In view of the fact that a new European war may soon break out, is the Government of the United States able, and does it intend, to maintain its present attitude of refusing to recognise the German occupation of our State, thus continuing the friendly policy towards Czechoslovakia which it has adopted hitherto?

(*c*) If war should come, can we expect the eventual recognition of a Czechoslovak Government in Exile as well as help for the Czechoslovak liberation movement which of course would conscientiously respect the laws of the United States and its neutrality while the United States remained neutral?

With regard to the first two questions the President immediately took a fully positive attitude. On the third question he expressed the view that the United States could certainly do as much for Czechoslovakia as during the war of 1914–18 but that a favourable decision in this particular question would depend on circumstances and the actual war situation. He added: 'You may be sure that in this war we will not do less for you than in the last war.'

On June 29th, 1939, just before my return to Europe, I also visited the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. I gave him my opinion of the European situation and I raised the same questions about our affairs. I did not ask for an immediate reply as I was to get it on the following day—by arrangement with President Roosevelt—from Under-Secretary Sumner Welles who was to give me Roosevelt's final message. On that day I had a long conversation with Sumner Welles in our Legation in Washington in the presence of Envoy Vlad. Hurban. We discussed the events in Europe in detail and especially the development of German and Soviet policy. Sumner Welles again repeated in substance the assurances which President

Roosevelt himself had given to me during my visit to Hyde Park.

On July 12th, 1939, I left the United States. I was hastening to Europe because I feared I might not arrive before Hitler attacked Poland.

4. *Great Britain, France and ourselves at the beginning of the War*

As I approached the shores of England, I considered how to begin my work in London. I remembered how we had been received in October, 1938: with embarrassment on the part of the political world and a strong hint from the Foreign Office that I should behave with very great reserve; with sorrow, mingled sometimes with indignation against British policy, on the part of all my own and Czechoslovakia's friends; with real understanding everywhere from ordinary people. One of the first to visit me in Gwendolen Avenue, Putney, and to express his contempt of the policy of the so-called democratic Powers, was H. G. Wells. I got a letter from Lord Robert Cecil. Old friends came to see me: H. Wickham Steed and Mrs. Steed, R. W. Seton-Watson and Mrs. Seton-Watson, Sir Walter Layton* and Lady Layton, the family of R. F. Fitzgibbon Young and Mrs. Young and many others. Now after my return from the United States these visits were repeated in greater number and with greater emphasis, with increased sympathy and attended by more important political conversations. Furthermore, a number of important journalists came to ask for interviews and articles. I was asked to lecture. Friends from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge also came to see me.

During the first week of my new sojourn in Britain, I again adopted an attitude of reserve as I had once more been warned by the Foreign Office that it would not be advisable to air our problems in public. But shortly after July 20th, Jan Masaryk and Wickham Steed told me that a special Parliamentary group intended to invite me to lunch and to make a small, intimate but, for the time being, private political demonstration to show that they had not forgotten Czechoslavakia or me. They told me that the demonstration would be sponsored by Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden but that all political parties would participate. All felt that the clouds were beginning to gather over Europe, that the political atmosphere was becoming more charged with electricity. It was commonly expected that something serious would soon happen. They did not want Munich to be forgotten.

I accepted the invitation to lunch on behalf of myself and my wife (and our Minister, Jan Masaryk). The date was fixed for July 27th, 1939, and

*Now Lord Layton, C.H. (Tr.).

the occasion took the character of a political demonstration for Czechoslovakia. In the chair was Winston Churchill, that man of invincible energy and youthful, romantic spirit 'to whom Great Britain always ran as to a war-horse, whenever she was threatened by war'—as J. V. Stalin said of him to me later. About forty persons were present, politicians and men of affairs, and it can be said that around the table sat a great part of those who were at that time forming public opinion in Britain. Besides Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden the other politicians present included Lord Robert Cecil, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Arthur Henderson, Arthur Greenwood, leader of the Labour Party, Miss Megan Lloyd George, Lord Lytton, Lord Davies, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter (later chairman of the Liberal Party), the old Labourite J. R. Clynes, General E. L. Spears, Harold Nicolson, Sir Walter Layton, Professor R. W. Seton-Watson, Among the journalists were Wickham Steed, Gordon Lennox, Captain Liddell-Hart and many others. Speeches were made by Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Lord Robert Cecil, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Arthur Henderson, Harold Nicolson and Wickham Steed. I replied for our party.

In his opening speech, Churchill referred in terms of very warm appreciation of my political activity for more than twenty years and my work for peace and a decent policy in Europe in general, as well as to my self-denying behaviour during the crisis in 1938. He declared that there would be no peace in Europe so long as Czechoslovakia remained enslaved and he promised that he would always work to right the dreadful wrong which had been committed against us. He concluded: 'I do not know how events will develop. And I cannot say that Great Britain will now go to war for Czechoslovakia. *I only know for certain that the peace which still has to be established will not be made without Czechoslovakia.*' As he spoke these words Churchill was so deeply moved that his eyes filled with tears.

After Churchill had spoken I replied in a short speech. I thanked all present for the friendly reception accorded me after my return to England from the United States. I declared that in September, 1938, I had felt I could not stand alone against the will of the Western European Powers because I was convinced that this would have meant our speedy ruin under conditions which would have been very unfavourable to us. I reminded Anthony Eden of our talk in April, 1935, in Prague when standing before a great map of Europe in my ministerial office. I had informed him of the plans of Germany and already foretold exactly the possible chain of events which had actually come to pass in Europe. I added that when I had arrived in England in October, 1938, I had not got into touch with friends and acquaintances because I did not want to make the situation

more difficult either for them, the British Government or the Government of the Second Republic. In America, too, I had maintained great reserve. I had abandoned this attitude only after German infamy had reached its height by occupying Prague and after my warnings had been proved true. At that point I had got into touch with American public figures including President Roosevelt, members of his Cabinet and of both political parties. I stated with satisfaction that I had found complete understanding in America for the Czechoslovak cause and that I now hoped to find a similar understanding in Britain, too. I asked all present not to forget the great and unmerited sufferings of the Czechoslovak people. This speech was received with warmest acclamations by all present.

Then Anthony Eden spoke. He identified himself, he said, with all that had been said by the two preceding speakers. He recalled his long co-operation with me in Geneva and 'the good advice he had so often received from me in Central Europe matters', and he fully confirmed that during his visit to Prague in 1935 he had been warned of what was being prepared in Germany. He too, solemnly declared that there was and would be no peace unless Czechoslovakia was liberated. Sir Archibald Sinclair (who a short time previously had courageously urged the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia at a public meeting) spoke for the Liberals. Deeply moved, he promised the co-operation and loyalty of all liberally-minded people in Britain to the ideals of democracy against Nazi dictatorship and he warmly praised the behaviour of our London Legation during the crisis of 1938. After him came Viscount Robert Cecil, well advanced in years, who declared in a speech which was classical in form and content that what Britain had done in September, 1938, was a 'shameful betrayal' of her whole great past and of all her present obligations to European democracy. He coupled this with moving reminiscences of President Masaryk and his meeting with him on various occasions.

Lord Lytton spoke in the same sense.

Young Arthur Henderson for the Labour Party associated himself with these speakers and declared that there were no differences between the political parties in respect of removing the injustice done to Czechoslovakia. He added that Great Britain would have to do her duty in solving the European political problems which were pending. In reply to a question from Steed who asked whether I could say something of my reception by official circles in America, I stated that I had been assured not only by President Roosevelt and State Secretary Cordell Hull but also by both political parties that America would never recognise the violence done to Czechoslovakia and that they had promised co-operation with the

European democracies in regard to future developments. All understood the sense of these declarations to be that what Neville Chamberlain ought now to do on Britain's behalf, Roosevelt and Hull had already done in America.

Churchill then closed the proceedings with a short address in which, after reminding us of the gravity of the moment, he summed up and stressed all that had been said.

By unanimous agreement, no special publicity was given to this occasion because tension was too great. I myself took the view that the difficult internal situation of Great Britain made it necessary to proceed cautiously. But the meeting was nevertheless a very important and characteristic sign of the general situation in Britain. What a change it denoted as compared with the conditions in London half a year previously when I was getting ready for my journey to the United States! How totally different was the comprehension of what was going on in Germany and on the European continent and how different was the present temper in the face of what had happened to British policy during the preceding year, especially in regard to the treatment meted out to Czechoslovakia! I at once saw clearly that in Great Britain also we could and must prepare to begin our fight for liberation and our work to overthrow German Nazism. It was for us an immensely encouraging moment!

When I arrived in London on July 18th, 1939, I found already at work: Jan Masaryk, Dr. Hubert Ripka, who on his own initiative had left our country immediately after Munich to begin political work in exile, Minister Smutný and Colonel Fr. Moravec. Shortly afterwards there came from Paris, General Ingr, General Viest and Dr. Outrata.* Reliable information which our London intelligence service received at that time from Czechoslovakia and Berlin convinced me that Germany would certainly begin its attack on Poland at the end of July or at the latest during August.

I therefore sought to collect around me at once as many collaborators as possible—it being my principle that *a priori* no honest patriot should be excluded from co-operation—and to unite our whole movement so far as this was then possible. My intention *was to establish the central seat of our resistance movement in London this time.*† I had also ascertained that important British political circles and British public opinion were fully aware of the gravity of European events and of the fact that the policy of 'appeasement' was visibly nearing its critical culmination. The British

*Dr. Outrata became Finance Minister in the Provisional Government (Tr.).

†In the first World War it had been established first in Geneva and then in Paris (Tr.).

'men of Munich', and of course even more those in Paris, still believed that the crisis between Poland and Germany would not lead to war and would at worst end with some 'second Munich'. They developed a really feverish activity in this direction.

Meanwhile more of our political collaborators had arrived in London from home. On July 20th, 1929, Dr. Milan Hodža came to me to London from Switzerland. We agreed—as I then thought easily—on the principle of our political co-operation. We concurred in the necessity of consistently fighting against Hitler and of re-establishing the Republic. We decided that we would not return to the past, would not discuss nor quarrel either about Munich or about our future internal affairs or about the new organisation of the State (Slovakia, Germans, etc.). This would be settled later when war began, while the war was in progress and especially after the war had ended—at home. I simply did not want to begin discussing matters which I feared would immediately give rise to dissension. Via Poland there arrived Monseigneur Jan Šrámek with the Consistorial Councillor František Hála,* Deputies Rudolf Bechyně, Dr. Jar. Stránský, Senator Vojta Beneš, the Slovak Deputy Ján Bečko, Deputy Fr. Uhlíř and many others who at once took their places in our joint political movement.

Our second important centre began to form in Paris soon after Munich partly around the Legation (Dr. Osuský†) and partly around the soldiers (Generals Ingr and R. Viest, Colonel Španiel, Col. Dr. Langer and others) and a number of politicians and journalists (Dr. H. Ripka, Minister J. Smutný, Dr. G. Winter and others). The Paris section was very active and prepared to renew the traditions of the struggle during the first World War. In these difficult moments it certainly did much good preparatory work. The Czechoslovak colony in Paris also worked well from the outset. At my request—following the intervention of our soldiers in Paris —Dr. Osuský came to London twice to discuss the situation and to make preparations for future co-operation between London and Paris. I regarded as our most important asset, however, the presence of our military intelligence service in London with a number of officers under Colonel Fr. Moravec together with a sufficient number of officers and soldiers in France with General Ingr and General Viest. To me these were a guarantee that when war started we could at once begin to organise the Czechoslovak liberation Army.

*Leaders of the People's Party when the war ended. Mgr Šrámek was the first Prime Minister of the Third Republic. Of the other persons named here, Rudolf Bechyně afterwards went into opposition to President Beneš (Tr.).

†A Slovak. Afterwards an opponent of President Beneš (Tr.).

Therefore, on September 3rd, when the German attack on Poland led to the declaration of war on Germany by Great Britain and France, it was clear to me that a great moment in world history had arrived—a moment which would have the most far-reaching consequences for the world.

For us, 11 a.m. on September 3rd was an extremely moving and stirring moment when in our small house in Putney we stood at the wireless set and listened with excitement to the broken voice of Neville Chamberlain announcing that at that very moment the British Ambassador in Berlin (it chanced to be Nevile Henderson—the second victim of Hitler's policy) was delivering the declaration of war.

Chamberlain's voice sounded really tragic and broken and fully indicated the whole tragedy of this moment and the dreadful error British diplomacy had lived to see after it had made so many moral and material sacrifices and sacrifices of prestige during its policy of seeking a so-called 'Peace with honour' with Hitler. In the whole history of world diplomacy there are few errors so fatal, so far-reaching in their consequences for all the world as this one!

Listening to the radio with my wife and myself, were Dr. Lobkowicz* and Mrs. Lobkowicz who by chance were visiting us. We listened, without uttering a word and deeply moved, to the whole speech of Chamberlain and to the British National Anthem which followed it. We stood, as it were, reverently, and speaking no word of comment. We felt all the terrible tragedy of the words of the British Prime Minister and were aware of that moment marking the beginning of dreadful suffering for the British Empire as well as of further unheard-of suffering for our own people. But at the same time we were aware, too, that this was the beginning of the fight for our new liberation and our first step after Munich towards our new independence!

On the afternoon of the same day we listened to the declaration of war by France. The voice of Daladier sounded even more broken, gloomy and tragic than that of the British Prime Minister. I could almost sense what that moment meant for France's leading man and could almost foresee how Daladier would himself ultimately react to all these events. That it meant his sad and final downfall was already clear to me!

Judging that our forces were ready for resistance and that in spite of all our differences we were sufficiently united, I sent on the same day—some hours after the declaration of war by Great Britain and France—telegrams to the Prime Ministers of Great Britain and the British Dominions, of

*Afterwards Czechoslovak Ambassador in London. His wife is Irish. They are now living in the United States (Tr.).

France and Poland, in which I simply stated that Czechoslovakia which legally continued to exist had been in a state of war with Germany since March 15th, 1939, and that it was automatically joining the Allies.

The text of the telegram was as follows:

'At this moment in which the British people are obliged to wage a war imposed upon Poland, Great Britain, and France by Nazi Germany, I wish to express to your Excellency, with deep and unalterable feelings of sympathy, the desire and decision of the Czechs and Slovaks to join your people without hesitation in this struggle for a free Europe.

'Our country is invaded and occupied by armed forces of Nazism and the whole Nation is suffering under inhuman terror and oppression. Its forces, however, both moral and physical, remain intact.

'We Czechoslovak citizens consider ourselves as being at war with the German military forces, and we shall march with your people till the final victory and the liberation of our Fatherland.'

On September 9th I received the following reply from Prime Minister Chamberlain:

'I gratefully acknowledge your Excellency's generous message of sympathy and support in this grave hour. The sufferings of the Czech Nation are not forgotten, and we anticipate that by the triumph of the principle for which we have taken up arms, the Czech people will be liberated from foreign domination.'

Similar replies arrived from the Governments of the British Dominions, Egypt and Iraq. *But there were no replies from the French or the Polish Prime Minister.* Both were still animated by the spirit of the pre-war policy of their countries and the policy of Munich, and took no cognizance of us—or at least (at that time) of me personally.

A week later, on September 19th, 1939—when our old friend Robert Bruce Lockhart who throughout the war rendered us such inestimable, friendly and devoted services had been appointed permanent and direct liaison officer between us and the Foreign Office—I began political negotiations with the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax.

It was a typically British reception that I got from Lord Halifax at the Foreign Office. He himself, as is well known, had played an important part in the events which led to Munich. At the time of my call he was certainly well aware, as was also Neville Chamberlain himself, what a terrible defeat the Munich policy and therefore also their own had suffered as a result of the latest events of 1939. But Lord Halifax had enough personal courage to declare when he greeted me and before any political discussion had taken place: 'We in Great Britain are fully aware of our

share in the responsibility for the destiny of your country and for your personal fate.' I answered: 'I thank you for those words, Lord Halifax. We will certainly return to this subject later. But today I would like to discuss how *we* can take part with you in this war.'

In the ensuing discussion at which Sir Orme Sargent was also present I did not again mention Munich. I only gave details of our future political and military plans. Finally I asked Lord Halifax to agree to the future establishment of a Czechoslovak political organ which would either take the place of a provisional Government or already be a Government. I explained that this committee would be the supreme organ of our whole diplomatic, political and military action. Above all it would be at the head of our Army which was already beginning to form in France and to some extent also in Britain.

Lord Halifax agreed in principle but deferred taking an actual decision. He asked me to continue with our preparations and our organising work and to keep the Foreign Office regularly informed of the progress of our work. The British Government would give us a definite answer later in accordance with the march of events and the future state of our movement. The conversation ended with a detailed discussion with Sir Orme Sargent of conditions in the 'protectorate' and the political and moral state of our Nation at home.

I would like to stress that in organising the movement we were from the beginning working on the principle that the authority of our Legations and Consulates in countries in which their official continuity had been secured, should not be infringed. This was not only to avoid any step which could weaken their existence or their position but also to secure for the liberation movement the use of their services and of their official status. This was a rather difficult question and there were often grave differences.

The reasons for these were easy to see. It was not clear whether France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and others which continued to recognise our Legations after March 15th, 1939, were also prepared to accept the *continuity of our State*. They did not want to commit themselves in this matter, wishing to be able to decide for or against according to the progress of the war and their own interests. For instance, I knew positively that in the summer of 1939 Germany had urged the abolition of our Legation in London. Some circles in London were in favour of doing so. Even in August, 1939—at the request of Counsellor Lisický of the Legation—I had had to ask Lord Halifax in a special personal letter that our Legation should remain untouched.

Our foreign missions therefore had to be extremely careful. But the

political movements—especially on the military side—were in general rather radical in their attitude towards Munich and its consequences and they tried to act from this standpoint. The Legations often felt endangered by this behaviour because radical demonstrations and conspicuous political and military decisions (which moreover were often directed against the British and French Governments) were followed by recriminations and warnings from the Governments concerned. On the other hand the Legations themselves showed a tendency to lead and govern the political and military movement or at least to play the most important and decisive rôle. But the direction of resistance and revolution 'officially' by the Legations led to a number of difficulties from which new conflicts arose. These quarrels disappeared in their more acute form only after a legal Government had again been recognised and the Republic had been fully re-established internationally.[19]

5. *My Attempts to reach agreement with France—the Negotiations of Monseigneur J. Šràmek*

On October 6th, 1939, at the very urgent request of General Ingr, Dr. Ripka and Dr. Outrata I left for Paris. Our Paris Legation and our military representatives had just finished rather difficult negotiations the outcome of which was an agreement with the French Government for the formation of our National Army in France under the control of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government. This provisional government, however, did not yet exist. Mention of it in this agreement was an indication that such a government might be established and recognised by the French Government at a later stage.

The agreement was signed—after certain internal controversies among ourselves—by Premier Daladier and Envoy Osuský on October 2nd, 1939. Ingr, Ripka and Outrata believed that immediately the army agreement was signed there would be negotiations for the establishment and recognition of the Government. They therefore asked me to make a point of being present. At their very urgent request I went to Paris—though not very gladly. I did not expect any favourable reception or negotiations. As it turned out, my trip was completely unsuccessful.

Before this, however, Monseigneur J. Šrámek had already gone to Paris from London in full agreement with me. We knew that the Daladier Government regarded me with great disfavour. Minister Šrámek, on the other hand, had some acquaintances in Catholic circles in Paris and General Ingr, Ripka and others thought he might have some influence, especially

with Catholics (for example with Champetier de Ribes, then State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). These expectations proved to be correct. Šrámek, therefore, became our chief negotiator with the Daladier Government when the re-establishment of our relations with France was discussed. But for the time being not even Šrámek could obtain more than consent to the establishment of a Czechoslovak National Committee in France. According to Šrámek, Daladier—through Champetier de Ribes—had rejected the establishment of a Government and had opposed my taking part in our movement at all. He had expressed his confidence in Osuský, especially, had tried to bring about the participation of Dr. Hodža and had hinted that he would eventually accept somebody else instead of me as leader of our resistance movement. Šrámek himself had taken a firm stand. He had not deviated from our fundamental policy. He had expressed himself with great reserve about Hodža and had not yielded in the matter of my participation in the movement. As he had not been able to secure the formation of a Government, he had given only provisional consent after mutual consultation, to the establishment of a Committee to supervise the organisation of our National Army. The whole negotiation was extremely difficult and painful and in a certain sense all our people found it both disturbing and depressing.

Nevertheless the trip did at least give me the chance to thresh out all current matters concerning our movement with our military representatives and political collaborators in France and to contact French political circles. Among the French ministers and politicians whom I then met, I mention E. Herriot, G. Mandel, Y. Delbos, Reynaud, Queuille, Blum, Paul-Boncour, Ambassador L. Noel, Pierre Comert, General Faucher*, not to mention many other politicians, journalists, professors, and a number of older friends.

When I asked for an interview Daladier refused to receive me or to discuss any political questions whatsoever with me. Afterwards he reported on the matter to the French Government giving his reasons. Daladier and Bonnet and the majority of their colleagues were continuing to maintain a reserved and *de facto*, a *negative* policy towards Czechoslovakia in spite of what they had done against the vital interests of the Czechoslovak Nation in 1938 and in spite of the fundamental changes in the general European situation after Munich and after the outbreak of war.

In reality, as I ascertained quite positively in Paris and later in London, too, both still held to their previous line and were steadily going on with their Munich policy. They had been forced to come to the aid of Poland

*French military attaché in Prague at the time of Munich. (Tr.).

against their will. They had evidently wanted to repeat in the case of Poland in September, 1939, what they had done to us a year before and to bring about a 'second Munich'. They had wanted to avoid any action which in their opinion could impair France's relations with Germany and even more with Italy and Hungary. As early as September, 1939—that is to say from the very beginning of hostilities—their plan had been to induce Italy and Hungary to refrain from entering the war on Germany's side, to localise the whole conflict in this way and then to work for early negotiations for a premature peace with Germany and to turn Germany towards a conflict with the Soviet Union. In order to realise this aim, *they were ready to sacrifice Czechoslovakia once more and, in some new form, Poland also.* I am describing here objectively what I saw and how I understood their policy at that time.

In addition to these considerations, I personally was a symbol of pre-war Czechoslovakia (which they considered to be completely dead) and of Czechoslovakia's former policy, a symbol of hostility against Mussolini and, of course, against Hitler. They had thrown Czechoslovakia and *me personally* to the wolves—and this too did not make them like me *personally.* In their opinion, therefore, it was impossible to link the France they represented with my person. Until the fall of France in June, 1940, they never changed their attitude towards Czechoslovakia or to me. Our friends of those days—for example Mandel and others—also assured me that another reason why Daladier had refused to speak to me was because, after what he had done to Czechoslovakia, he did not dare to look me in the face. No wonder . . .

What I saw and heard at that time of what was happening in France convinced me that as long as France remained under the leadership of Daladier, Bonnet, de Monzie and a number of similar politicians and gerrymanderers she could neither win the war, *nor recover from her grave illness.*

My stay in Paris, a month after the beginning of war, gave me a very bad impression of the state of France. I did not conceal this from my friends and after a fortnight in Paris I returned to London suddenly and without taking leave. I made up my mind that I would not be able to return to Paris during the war and that I would have to rely mainly on the British Empire and the United States for the prosecution of the war, always believing at the same time that later on the Soviet Union would also fight on our side. Accordingly I adapted the attitude and policy of our movement to the sad, grievous and cruel French reality . . . Events proved that already at that time I had rightly estimated the situation of France—and the war as a whole.[20]

In accordance with its plans, the Daladier Government acted *to prevent the formation of a Czechoslovak Government.* It justified this attitude on dissensions in our ranks and on its refusal to have anything to do with me politically.[21] After very difficult negotiations it would only allow the formation of a Czechoslovak National Committee with very limited competence. It behaved even worse towards us than Tsarist Russia in the first World War. As I have already mentioned, these negotiations were carried out on our side by Monseigneur Šrámek with Champetier de Ribes.

During my stay in Paris we therefore agreed on the formation of the Czechoslovak National Committee with such political and military functions as the French Government approved. It was stressed to Šrámek that I must not be Chairman of the Committee.

I ought to add that the British Government which was watching these negotiations in Paris with a certain reserve had its special point of view in these matters. It too considered that, *for the time being* it would be premature to form a regular Czechoslovak Government. Nevertheless it expressly told Paris that it would be quite impossible to form a Czechoslovak Government without my participation as Paris would have liked to do. This point of view was conveyed to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs while I was in Paris. But I only heard this myself from the British Foreign Office later (on February 10th, 1940).

Temporarily and willy-nilly we had to make do with the formation of the National Committee. By decision of the Committee I discussed its diplomatic recognition with the British Foreign Office after my return to London. The National Committee was recognised by the French Government on November 17th, and by the British on December 20th, 1939.

6. *The Paris National Committee and Our Emigration*

Though for the time being we only had a National Committee, we immediately began intensive and energetic work.[22] The National Committee established its seat in Paris which was the only place at that time in which it was possible to organise our Army with some prospect of success. I myself, while remaining in close contact and permanent co-operation with the Paris Committee, was organising our offices and our propaganda on British soil in London with the help of Jan Masaryk and Minister Smutný.

Under the firm and prudent leadership of its Paris Vice-President, Monseigneur Šrámek, the Committee without doubt obtained important

results in France throughout its period of activity which lasted from November, 1939, to the fall of France in June, 1940. It succeeded in solving a number of difficulties in spite of the unfavourable atmosphere of nervousness, defeatism and political disfavour in Paris. General Ingr and General Viest were entrusted with the administration of military matters and after many difficulties succeeded in organising the first Czechoslovak Division in France. Dr. Eduard Outrata was charged with the administration of financial and economic matters; Dr. Osuský took care of foreign affairs; Dr. Ripka dealt with information and Dr. Slávik was responsible for the social welfare of the emigrants. It was the most difficult period of our work and when the number of our quarrels was the greatest. Ultimately, the whole of this period, and the activities of the Committee which was often much criticised, will eventually be examined in detail and justly appreciated.

Towards the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940 the Socialist deputies František Němec and Bohumil Laušman came from Prague followed by Dr. Prokop Drtina, one of my nearest personal collaborators in the presidential office in Prague, deputy Jože David, Professor Vladimír Klecanda, Col. Hutník (Kudláček), Col. Chodský (Boček)* and a number of others. Most of them had taken part in the underground political activity at home. Some generals and hundreds of other officers escaped by various ways from Czechoslovakia at that time with the object of helping with the organisation of the Army in France. Among them were the generals Znamenáček (Cihák), Miroslav (Neumann), Nižborský (Hasal), Slezák (Vicherek), Ghak (Mézl) and Janoušek. Finally—also with a view to collaborating with us—there escaped the ministers Dr. L. Feierabend and Ing. Jaromir Nečas who had been in underground contact with me after the beginning of the war and before they left our country. In May, 1940, Ján Lichner, the Slovak Deputy and Minister in the post-Munich Government, left Slovakia. He got into touch with me while still on his way to Belgrade and was at once brought into our common work.†

A group of Czechoslovak Communists, among them some deputies and senators (Nosek, Hodinová, Valo, Beuer, Kreibich) who had left our country after Munich and had found asylum in England offered me their co-operation in the common fight as soon as I returned to Britain from the United States. We had a number of meetings which took a hopeful turn.

*The names in brackets were the real names and the others those taken during the war in the interests of relatives at home (Tr.).

†Mr. Lichner refused to leave Slovakia after the Communist Revolution and in 1950 was sentenced to 17 years' imprisonment on charges of treason, and espionage (Tr.).

But when the German-Soviet treaty was concluded on August 23rd, 1939, their attitude to the whole of our military and political activities became reserved. From that time they did not co-operate with us though our contact was never wholly interrupted. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union they renewed their former policy and co-operated unreservedly with us in the fight against Hitler.[23]

Until 1943 I was also in permanent and good contact with W. Jaksch, deputy of the German Social Democrats, and his political friends, as well as with other German political groups (Zinner, Lenk, Kirpalová, Kögler, Peres) who had left the country after Munich.*

Such was the composition of our Western political emigration in the spring of 1940. Everywhere we relied on those diplomatic and consular missions which continued to be recognised and had been preserved and on our military organisation which already had a solid basis and was accepted as serious evidence of our efforts and aims and the feelings of the whole Nation. But mainly, of course, we relied *on our daily and permanent contact with our country and on the resistance of the whole Nation at home against Germany*. The unheard-of terror which the Germans adopted against us at home from the outbreak of the war especially after October 28th and November 17th, 1939,† and the fact that the whole world knew that we abroad were only expressing what the Nation at home was feeling and doing—all this entitled us to come forward immediately and unequivocally in the spirit of the legal continuity of our State *as representatives and symbols of the fight of the whole Nation.*

In the spring of 1940—knowing that the Germans were preparing for the attack against Belgium and the Netherlands—I judged it to be time to put forward in London the question of the formation and recognition of a Czechoslovak Government on the soil of Great Britain, thus giving the Czechoslovak liberation movement the correct international, legal and political form. That day arrived after the fall of France when our Army had been evacuated and transferred to Britain and when the Czechoslovaks —as well as the Poles, Dutch, Belgians, Norwegians and Free French— made London their official headquarters and the chief centre of their Western political emigration.

*Dr. Jaksch and the other German leaders ceased to co-operate when Dr. Beneš and the Czechoslovak Provisional Government adopted the policy of expelling the German minority (Tr.).

†The date of the disturbances in Prague, November 17th, 1939, when Jan Opletal and two other students were buried was afterwards adopted as International Students' Day in their memory (Tr.).

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

[1]The text of this address appears in the Appendix.

[2]A typical letter was the one given below to Ing. Jaromír Nečas, former and subsequent Minister*;

DEAR COLLEAGUE NEČAS,

Thank you for your friendly letter. Yes, the time will come, the time for all of us who took the right road against evil and cowardice. In that certainty I am quietly and firmly preparing for our future work. We will meet again. There are no other alternatives than justice, truth, fair play on the one side; evil, violence, cowardice and betrayal on the other. We went the first way—we will continue in it. Kind regards to you and your wife—also from my wife!

Yours,

DR. EDUARD BENEŠ

London, October 30th, 1938.

[3]My answer to Dr. L. Rašín has been published in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pages 22-32.† Rašín's letter to me read as follows:

Prague, November 7th, 1938.

MR. PRESIDENT,

I could not bring myself to write to you at the time of your resignation from office. Then you left and again there was no opportunity for me to write. But now the development of our political situation and the attacks hurled against you, compel me to send you these few sincere and frank words.

It happened that I did not come frequently into contact with you until the days when the events drew to their tragic culmination. I regret this very much. From that morning of September 22nd when I saw you exhausted and desperate, I feared that the capitulation of the State would necessarily lead to your resignation. I feared that the idea of an independent and united Czechoslovak State which had been realised through so many sacrifices, efforts and lives, would break down. I, with a few of my friends, wanted to prevent this: to prevent the capitulation of the State by going to war even at the price of immense sacrifices, to prevent your resignation by forming a strong Government of courageous men even at the price of suppressing the political parties. I wanted to prevent demoralisation and preserve the moral ideals of the Nation—the ideals by which it lives—even at the price of Bohemia becoming Thermopylae and you Leonidas.

Things did not work out in this way and I do not want to return today to our conversations. If in these I have perhaps sometimes been too sincere and open, please bear me no grudge. I was actuated by one single desire: to save the independence and honour of the Nation and to preserve those moral values which had been accumulated during twenty years of independence. Today I would like to tell you something else. In my Party, very often quite alone, and in public almost alone, I am still defending your political standpoint which, as I understand it, was the concept of a truly free and independent State conforming to our evolution through a thousand years. From this

*Mr. Nečas died in London during the war when holding the office of Minister of State in the Provisional Government.

†Not available in English.

concept arose the risk of an armed conflict with Germany. My only reproach is that we did not face this danger when it became concrete. Evading the logical conclusion, we have deprived the logical premises of their validity. Perhaps I am wrong and perhaps I find it easier to take such a line than you who were responsible at that moment for hundreds of thousands of lives. But I am still convinced that conditions dictated after a war that has been lost would not be much worse than the conditions of a 'peace' which delivers a million Czech souls to extinction and slavery and delivers the State, now tri-partite instead of united, unconditionally to its neighbours. I do not know whence we shall be able to draw inspiration for national heroism.

Today they are looking for a scapegoat. I am sorry that what I warned you of is coming true: you alone are to bear the responsibility for everything that happened and all those cowards who hid behind you and your authority, who left the decision to you so that they themselves could shelve the responsibility of taking it, do not raise a finger to defend you and to admit their share of responsibility. To all these 'politicians' who were around you and with whom you supposed you would lead the State out of the catastrophe, and in whose loyalty you trusted, nothing is more welcome than the opportunity to divert the attention of the Nation from their own guilt by inciting it against you. I had and have no illusions about our political life. But I never thought that in a time so tragic for Nation and State there would be in our political life so little chivalry, responsibility and courage and so much baseness, cowardice and lack of character—such a desire to turn the national catastrophe to personal profit.

That is why I am writing to you, Mr. President. I would like to assure you that I have nothing in common with these agitations and attacks against you even if my own Party and its press are making them. The most reliable proof of the correctness of a policy is said to be its results. Of two catastrophes from which we could choose you have chosen the one which has happened. I would have chosen the other one—war. In this I did not agree with you. But I did not on that account lose my respect for your qualities and abilities and I am not ready to forget all the positive sides of your work for the Nation and State during a quarter of a century. With grief and sorrow I can see that by your resignation the idealistic generation which worked for the liberation of the Nation during the war at home and abroad is disappearing from our public life and that post-war materialists are getting a hearing whose aim is to make the Republic serve their personal advantage.

I wish you, Mr. President, enough rest and strength, and especially I wish for you that your wife should retain her strength and calmness—she who always so valiantly bore, with you, all good and evil and whom all who had the honour of knowing her remember with respect. I am happy that I, and my wife also, belong to their number.

With the expression of my profound respect,

I am, sincerely yours,

Dr. Ladislav Rašín.

[4]My letter to Hácha read as follows:

London, November 30th, 1938.

Mr. President,

I know well what grave tasks you will have as President of the Republic, and therefore I am writing to wish both for the Republic and yourself, that your election today may in these difficult times contribute to its full prosperity. You have done great services to our country as President of the Administrative Court by your great experi-

ence and knowledge and by your just and careful legal procedure often in the most delicate matters. That all at home have united to bring about your election only underlines this fact. I send you my best wishes for the success of your new work and I hope that the State and Nation may emerge from their present situation as soon, and in as good condition, as possible.

With the expression of my sincere respect,
Dr. Eduard Beneš.

P.S. In the rush of events it was not possible for me to answer your telephone call in the last days of the crisis. I had several times considered the procedure you suggested and had discussed it with Envoy Mastný. Perhaps it will be possible at a later date to tell why it could not be adopted.

Dr. E. B.

In the last days of the Munich negotiations Dr. Hácha had expressed his opinion by telephone that I should interrupt negotiations with France and Great Britain and speak directly to Berlin. I do not know how he got this idea. When the crisis came to a head, I had considered all possible ways of saving the situation and I had—at least for a moment—thought of this possibility, too. But I rejected it without even allowing my thoughts to formulate the full consequences.

Hácha's answer, which reached me in London, read as follows:

Prague, December 10th, 1938.

Mr. President,

Your kind letter has moved, but also stimulated, me in my task which I accepted with hesitation and the greatest self-denial as a hard burden which duty laid upon me. I was looking forward to a modest private life and to following up my old bent for literary work. The duties of my present office weigh very heavily on me as I am aware of my insufficiency. I am trying within the limits of my strength 'to make the best of it' and console myself with the hope that my functions will only have a transitory character and that they will be taken from me within a measurable space of time. I am aware of the fact that I shall be judged severely soon but contemporaries are perhaps never capable of just judgment.

I beg you to accept the expression of my sincere respect and my wish that you should enjoy the best of health.

Dr. E. Hacha.

[5]After the visit of Chamberlain and Halifax to Rome on January 12th-14th, 1939, there were intensive negotiations for special treaties to give effect to the Italo-British appeasement agreement of November 16th, 1938.

[6]At that time I did not expect the events of March 15th and I therefore believed that my brother could safely return to Prague—at any rate for some time. But afterwards he had to take the risk of a very dangerous escape via Poland.

[7]I signed this telegram as 'former' President of the Republic because I felt that before the outbreak of war the situation was not ripe for an *immediate and public presentation* of the claim of legal continuity for the pre-Munich Republic. This happened soon afterwards. Some of my collaborators (e.g. Envoy Hurban*) asserted that already at that

*Czechoslovak Minister in Washington. (Tr.).

time I should have signed: '*second*' President of the Czechoslovak Republic and not 'former' President. People of bad will, they said, could use this designation against the theory of continuity. And later such people certainly did misuse it—as well as my letter to Hácha (see page 95).

[8]The full text of this address is in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 39–46.

[9]For the full text of the Soviet Note see Appendix, pp. 296–7. The note explained the whole political and legal attitude of the Soviet Government. It was at that time a clear diplomatic, legal and political analysis of the real character of the German act of violence of March 15th.

[10]The French note was published in the French diplomatic documents, 1938–39 (Livre jaune), doc. number 76, 77.

[11]As I have already mentioned, the Soviet Union answered with a very firm Note and refused to recognise the annihilation of Czechoslovakia. It continued to grant all aid to the Czechoslovak Legation in Moscow and recognised its legal and diplomatic position until January 1st, 1940, when it changed its policy, having previously informed the Czechoslovak Envoy in Moscow on December 15th, 1939, that it would consider his functions to be at an end on January 1st, 1940.* Envoy Zdeněk Fierlinger left Moscow for Paris and London and joined our movement in Western Europe. I expected that this change of Soviet policy would prove only temporary and provisional. Therefore we did not protest. We waited patiently for the day when it would be possible for us to return to our joint policy and to renew our friendly diplomatic relations. That day came more than one and a half years later after Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June, 1941.

[12]I answered them in an address printed in the Appendix.

[13]During the following weeks many of our diplomatic and consular, political and military officials and functionaries announced their adherence to me one after the other. Altogether, their help was valuable and efficient. And though our situation at that time was very bad, especially financially, all of them gradually joined in the full work of resistance.

[14]We in London† were not in agreement with the spirit and tendencies of General Prchala's work though we had to submit to politically inescapable necessities in order to prevent differences in our resistance movement. We did not agree because General Prchala yielding to Polish wishes allowed the formation of 'Czech' and 'Slovak' legions, and because he and his friends asked for and received from the Polish Government of Col. Beck money for *political* activities and their personal subsistence. We also disapproved because for some time they refused to accept the principle of unity in our activities in West and East and wanted—to the detriment of the unity of our whole movement—to exploit the hostility of the Polish Government against me personally.

[15]In spite of the strong position held by the so-called 'men of Munich' in Britain and France at that time in Government, in Parliament and in public opinion, the international

*The change in Soviet policy followed the Soviet-German agreement and the partition of Poland (Tr.).

†Dr. Beneš returned to London from America on July 19th, 1939 (Tr.).

situation was developing in such a way that I already considered it possible to make an unequivocal denunciation of Munich and of announcing the principle of the legal continuity of our State in my first public pronouncement on the situation.

[16]Hamilton Fish Armstrong: *When There is no Peace*, London, Macmillan, 1941.

[17]Soon after my return to England an identical point of view was formulated by the Labour Party leaders, Arthur Greenwood and Arthur Henderson Jr., who at that time were not sure whether the situation in 1938 might not in the end have led to a European war directed only against the Soviet Union. However that may be, England, in their opinion, was not yet ready or sufficiently united internally to undertake war against Hitlerite Germany.

[18]This question was later solved justly and rightly in agreement with Great Britain.

[19]At this point the so-called 'Envoy-Theory' must be mentioned.

Our Envoy, or Legation official, who had remained in office after March 15th, 1939, and was still recognised by the Government to which he had been accredited, held himself to be and was in reality the last vestige of the authority of the Republic which *de facto* had been suppressed at home. This automatically gave him a very advantageous position compared with all other Czechoslovak citizens abroad whose legal position from the international standpoint was very uncertain. On account, particularly, of this exceptional situation, he had a politically very important position which meant much, and enabled him to do much, for the Republic in those difficult times. In particular, so far as the State was concerned he could serve as an important *starting point* for the new fight and as a basis for new political successes when the full political fight for liberation began afresh.

This aspect of our Legations had to be respected by us all. The difficulty lay in the fact that some envoys—in reality Dr. Osuský was the only one—formed their own conclusions and drew impossible deductions. They regarded all other political personalities as 'private' persons and themselves to be the only political representatives of the State and Nation. They claimed that this entitled them to some special position of leadership in the resistance movement, to the right of independent decisions about what should and should not be done, what a particular person should, or was allowed to, do and whether he should be admitted to this or that work or official position. At the beginning Dr. Osuský, for example (having in view the attitude of the French Government) opposed the formation of a central resistance organ. In particular he opposed on various grounds the formation of a collective political organ of the whole Nation which should have authority over everyone without exception. Dr. Osuský did not *publicly* develop this theory to its full extent and with all its implications. He merely hinted at it occasionally as, for instance, in an interview with the *Petit Parisien* in October, 1939. But he acted upon it to the full in respect of others wherever possible.

This caused us great difficulties for a long time. In practice, it meant that an envoy who enjoyed such an independence and who was not subordinated to a Government was in reality a Sovereign and could use his exceptional position according to his own judgment being neither controlled by nor subordinate to anyone. Moreover he had invaluable advantages in this serious time: diplomatic privileges, the right of cypher, passport visas wherever he wished to travel, access to the authorities, in some cases even financial means or the possibility of an income from Legation and consular functions, etc.

In cases of political disagreement with him we others were in a very disadvantageous position.

From the outset I regarded this as a danger to our whole movement. And I considered such behaviour on the part of an envoy to be not only an unwholesome sign but also as unpatriotic and an expression of very unpolitical thinking. Any envoy who adopted such a policy exposed himself to the possibility—very detrimental to the interests of the State—that he would lose all independence *vis-à-vis* the Government to which he had been accredited because by a mere stroke of the pen he could be eliminated whenever that Government chose. He was thus condemned to become a puppet in their hands and in their political manoeuvres. Correct, political, thinking should have made him recognise that his greatest interest was in the quickest possible establishment of a national, political centre and of a national authority above him with which he could co-operate and which he could support in his special position so as to prepare the new diplomatic recognition of the State. This is what, for example, our Minister in Washington, Vladimír Hurban, did with great correctness immediately after March 15th, 1939, when on March 19th he came to Chicago to agree with me about our future steps. A number of other officials also acted in this manner, gradually reporting for work in the resistance movement.

Having already some misgivings on this point immediately after March 15th, 1939, I first intended to establish a kind of board of political directors composed of our Envoys in London, Paris, Washington, Moscow and Warsaw as a first step towards the later formation of a recognised Government. Another reason for doing so was that at that time there were no other political personalities abroad and I hoped in this way to circumvent 'envoy difficulties' and disputes arising therefrom. Our Legation in Paris at once sent a negative answer giving as reason that the French Government did not want the establishment of such a centre and that if it were set up it would endanger the existence of our Legation in Paris. I have no doubt that the post-Munich Paris Government was against this step. At that time, or so it seemed to us, it was against everything I was doing abroad.

Again in Paris, this 'envoy theory' was also of some importance at a later stage when there were negotiations for the formation of the first Government and particularly on the subject of my exclusion from the leadership of the second resistance movement. The theory was again of great importance after the National Committee had been formed and a bitter personal quarrel developed between its members and Envoy Osuský. It continued to operate right up to the moment when the Czechoslovak Government was formed in London and recognised in July, 1940. It caused us much trouble and evoked a number of quarrels. But except Osuský no other Envoy either referred to it, or practised it.

[20]While in Paris I wrote my frank opinion of the situation in France to Ambassador Fr. Charles-Roux in Rome and to Senator Barbier of Darney who during my visit had further discussions with me about finishing the monument in Alsace for our soldiers from World War I.

[21]Dr. Osuský, who wanted to emphasize that I was unacceptable in France, wrote to me of the hostile way in which Daladier had spoken to him, confidentially, about my whole political activity and especially of my behaviour during the Munich crisis. The letter was intended to be an insult. It was meant to be an argument against my taking any part in our resistance movement. I brought it to the notice of Monseigneur Šrámek and later of our London Government.

[22]The original members of the Committee were: Beneš, Ingr, Osuský, E. Outrata, Ripka, Slávik, Šrámek and Viest. At the time the Committee was formed I asked that it should be put on record that the Committee would be enlarged when other politicians, especially those belonging to Socialist groups*, arrived from home and by Jan Masaryk representing our emigrants in Britain. During the negotiations for recognition of the Committee by Great Britain I announced this to the British Government in writing.

[23]Our Communist emigrants in the Soviet Union will be dealt with in the chapter on the Soviet Union. I expect that in course of time the Communists themselves will speak of the activities of this emigration.

*There were several Socialist parties in Czechoslovakia before the war, and two when the Czechoslovak Government returned to Prague after the war. These two were the Social Democrats and the National Socialists—the party to which Dr. Beneš himself belonged before he became President. At the general election in 1946, the National Socialist Party obtained more votes than any other except the Communist Party (Tr.).

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST GREAT CRISIS OF THE WAR: CAPITULATION OF FRANCE

1. *Rescuing the Czechoslovak Army from France*

FROM the beginning of April, 1940, we got daily reports from perfectly reliable sources in Prague and Berlin that Germany was preparing to attack France and Great Britain via Belgium and the Netherlands. Already at the outbreak of war I had no doubt that Germany was preparing a plan of this kind and would carry it out. I saw this attack as an inevitable development of the war. The German 'Drang nach Osten' must always be a 'Drang nach Westen' too. Unfortunately this fundamental element of German policy was, once again in 1938, not understood by the leading men of France and Great Britain and of the other European States. They had to pay dearly for it. And I do not conceal my fear that they will be ready to do the same again in the future because in politics, human stupidity and human egotism are inexhaustible.

After the attack on Norway in April, 1940, I considered that the invasion of Belgium and the Netherlands would provide a suitable occasion for obtaining international recognition of our Government through the good offices of the British Government and for establishing the whole legal and political organisation of the Czechoslovak Republic in exile thus gradually preparing the cancellation of what had happened at Munich. This mode of procedure would also serve the purpose of recalling to people's minds what had happened under the leadership of Masaryk at the end of the last war, in 1918.

I opened these negotiations on April 26th, 1940, in a conversation with Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under Secretary of State in the British Foreign Office. I asked for the consent of the British Government to the formation of a Czechoslovak Government on British soil, a Government composed of the members of the present (already recognised) Czechoslovak National Committee with additions which would make it as far as possible representative of all the political strata of the Czechoslovak people. In the beginning the British Government had some doubts. It also felt bound to France where the hostile attitude of the Daladier Government towards Czechoslovakia did not change until its fall on March 20th, 1940, though the formation of the Reynaud Government which followed

created a situation which might have been regarded as a slight improvement so far as we were concerned.

In May, June and July these verbal and written discussions between the British Foreign Office and myself continued. There was a rather extensive correspondence in notes and memoranda—on our side they were given to the British Government through Bruce Lockhart—which clarified and finally solved all difficulties. At the end of June the recognition of the Government was decided upon and assured.

Meanwhile, on May 10th, 1940, the Germans had carried out their attack on Belgium and the Netherlands. There followed the German advance into France, the piercing of the front, the dividing asunder of the French and British Armies and the concentration of the British forces at Dunkirk. By the beginning of June it was, broadly speaking, clear to us in London that events were leading inexorably to the military breakdown of France.

Our first care was to rescue the Czechoslovak army in France for the further fight. It was clear to me that Great Britain could not, and would not, follow the example of France and that she would enter into no armistice negotiations with Germany. We therefore decided to do all in our power to rescue our soldiers from France and to ensure that all Czechoslovaks at home and abroad would remain allies of the British Empire without compromise, without hesitation and until the end, come what might. Our struggle was not inspired merely by the thought of who would win. It was an uncompromising moral struggle—a fight against evil with which for us there was, and could be, no compromise.

When it was quite clear that France was preparing to capitulate and when I ascertained that the Poles, too, would try to ship their army from France to England, I decided on June 18th, 1940, to send a letter to Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for War, in which I stressed that:

'As you know, we have in France our National Army. It consists now of one division and a special Czechoslovak air unit. Whatever may happen in France, the Czechoslovak National Committee will continue its present policy at the side of your country in the common fight against Germany and Italy. It is, therefore, of vital importance for us to rescue this Army at the time of the final evacuation of your Army from French territory. I am sure that this would be of great political importance from the general European political standpoint.

'In agreement with my political colleagues and the Commander of our Army in France we have carried through all necessary measures for rescuing our Army to continue the fight. I beg you and the British

Government to help us in these our endeavours. In present circumstances my direct connection with our soldiers in France is very difficult. But if your military representatives in France would contact our Army (which is now in the Agde camp near Montpellier in Southern France) and its Commander-in-Chief, General Ingr (who is in Beziers, near Agde), mutual agreement could be reached to take all necessary steps for its rescue.'

On the same day I sent a similar letter to Sir Archibald Sinclair, Secretary of State for Air, and intervened personally with politicians and officials in the Foreign Office, the War Office and the Admiralty.

The official reply of both Ministers to my letter arrived immediately. In those critical times these friends of Czechoslovakia fully understood the political importance of rescuing our soldiers and gave us their sincere help.[1]

In London we were at the same time in constant communication with our military command in France and we co-ordinated our action with the negotiations carried on by General Ingr. For the British Government, occupied as it was with the rescue of its great expeditionary force, this was a period of immense strain. But we too, in those days, experienced moments of something near to despair: in the military sense, all was at stake.

At that time, the Czechoslovak Forces in France consisted of a relatively numerous flying corps and one army infantry division. The airmen had been sent to the front under General Slezak (Vicherek) immediately after the outbreak of war and fought under the French flag and in French units. On June 17th, the day of the capitulation, several hundreds were at the front, some were in an instruction camp in Merignac, near Bordeaux, and others were concentrated in Port Vendre. The British Broadcasting Corporation made it possible for us to broadcast French and Czech appeals to our airmen to concentrate and fly to Great Britain. In a short while, more than 500 air personnel arrived safely in England. The rest reached England after daring and adventurous flights and travels and after overcoming all obstacles and traps set for them by the Germans as well as local difficulties from the side of the French. Thus when the historic Battle of Britain began six weeks later, our airmen could already play an important part in the fight against the common enemy.

The Czechoslovak infantry division in France, the two regiments of which were also at the front at the time of the capitulation, succeeded in forcing its way to the Mediterranean after extremely difficult negotiations and disputes which sometimes got very near to actual violence. General Ingr remained ashore with a group of about 60 officers and devotedly

ensured the departure of the various units of the division. The French General Staff made no difficulties, but the local authorities gave no support whatever to our soldiers; transport connections and the French administrative apparatus were already in a chaotic state. It was also necessary to wait for the regiments to arrive direct from the front, and this created great difficulties. And so it was not possible to evacuate even a half of our soldiers in France. The part of the division which was rescued finally reached a Northern English harbour* in mid-July, 1940, after overcoming various obstacles.

On a small scale this adventure reminded us of our Siberian march in World War I. Some of our detachments had to save themselves via North Africa, others via Gibraltar, others even by way of Casablanca. Some of our airmen and soldiers escaped from France to Egypt or to Palestine and were brought to Great Britain many weeks later after very complicated travels.† The fight to save our small army and air force will remain one of the most dramatic events of our Western army units during the second World War. And the help the Czechoslovak soldiers and airmen received from the British Navy and the British authorities in their difficult situation, which often seemed to be quite hopeless, will be a lasting proof of the renewed friendship and solidarity of these two nations in their common fight against Nazism.

On July 14th, after the arrival of our units on British territory, Anthony Eden sent the following message to the soldiers of the Czechoslovak Army:

> 'As Secretary of State for War, and on behalf of all ranks of your comrades of the British Army, I extend to you a most cordial welcome upon the occasion of your arrival upon our shores. From these shores, from the high seas, from the air, and from every base of operations within the British Empire we have resolved with your valuable aid to attack and overwhelm the forces of our common enemy, and we are further resolved never to relinquish that sacred cause until your beloved Mother Country for which you have bled and suffered so long has been restored once and for all to her own sons and daughters.'

Our policy in these tragic four weeks—from the fall of France and the signing of the armistice to the rescuing of our Army and its transference to British soil—was based on the declaration which I broadcast to the people of Czechoslovakia in the Czech Lands and Slovakia on June 19th, two days after the French capitulation. In it I assured them that this was neither the end of the war nor a final victory of Germany. The British Empire

*Liverpool (Tr.).

†Some of them fought in the Western Desert and took part in the siege of Tobruk (Tr.).

would persevere in the fight to the end. We would march with it whatever should happen. But neither was France conquered and her resistance would continue. And America would intervene in the war, and the Soviet Union was aware that Central and Eastern Europe—and the Soviet Union with them—were now in greater danger than before. It would be the turn of them all. Therefore, there must be no doubts, no fears. The war, I said, was continuing and would continue till the final fall of Germany and Italy.[a]

2. *The British Recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government*

During our negotiations for rescuing the Czechoslovak Army and Air Force I continued my conversations with the Foreign Office for the recognition of our Government. The arrival of Czechoslovak military forces in Great Britain gave to these conversations a new and firmer legal and practical basis. The formation and recognition of a Government became so to speak a necessity.

Soon after March 15th, 1939, I had worked out a legal basis for the military and political re-establishment of Czechoslovakia on French and British soil. In the years 1915 to 1918 we had worked in a similar way; but in the second World War, though our military forces at that time were much smaller than in 1918, we had a much greater claim and incomparably stronger reasons for being recognised, for becoming war allies and for enjoying again all the rights of an independent State fighting against Germany. Twenty years of liberty and all that had happened since September 19th, 1938, entitled us to this while on the British Empire and all others it imposed an enduring, weighty moral and legal duty until our liberation was complete.

This legal concept was based on the following fundamental principles:

1. Our State had legally never ceased to exist. No Czechoslovak must renounce this principle of continuity either in the internal or international sphere. All that had happened since September 19th, 1938, had happened illegally, unconstitutionally and had been forced on us by threats, terror and violence. We would never recognise it.

2. As in the last war, we will again create our National Army—even if it is only a small one—and incorporate it in the whole military action of the Allies. The Army will be independent, Czechoslovak and a continuation of our home army of republican days.

3. We will establish a Czechoslovak Government and strive for its recognition and we will incorporate ourselves politically and diplomati-

cally into the ranks of the fighting allied nations. We will establish our whole governmental and State apparatus on allied territory for the solution of all legal, administrative, economic and financial questions between the Allies and ourselves, thus fully re-establishing the Republic—for the time being, on foreign territory—not only legally, but also in fact, in international policy, with all the consequences for the nation at home.

4. We will organise all our political emigrants in an official, consultative, semi-parliamentary organ, to act as a control of the Government; organise, and discipline our political collaborators and soldiers and give to the whole movement, order, respect, coherence, and most important of all, a *democratic character and spirit*. At the same time we will thus secure the co-operation of the most reliable of our people either in military, political or official activities and thus demonstrate our political experience and maturity.

This sketch of our further work and the development of our movement I gave to the Foreign Office during our negotiations for the recognition of the Government. The presence of our brigade and our airmen on British soil was my last and most impressive argument. At the beginning of July we reached agreement on nearly all fundamental points. So on July 9th, 1940, I sent the following letter to Lord Halifax:*

'In my letter of December 20th, 1939, I had the honour of announcing to Your Excellency the formation of a Czechoslovak National Committee authorized to represent the Czechoslovak people and especially to do in the United Kingdom, in agreement with the Government of His Majesty, all that may be necessary to re-establish the Czechoslovak Army under the competence of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

'By your letter of the same day, the British Government recognised the Czechoslovak National Committee in the sense mentioned above.

'For some months the Czechoslovak National Committee has worked within its competence and responsibility and has organised the Army, which has now been evacuated from France and arrived in Britain. It also has fulfilled its duty both to the Czechs and the Slovaks suffering in the homeland, by organising their resistance against the common enemy at home, as well as abroad. It has prepared all that is necessary for the next phase of our fight for the liberation of our country from German occupation.

'This new phase is now beginning. In the new situation arising from the latest events in our country and in Europe generally, the National

*Original English text not available (Tr.).

Committee—in agreement with the Army, with all Czechoslovak political elements abroad, but especially in agreement with the clearly perceptible and unbreakable spirit of resistance of the immense majority of the whole population of our occupied country—has now decided to establish a Provisional Czechoslovak Government with a complete State organisation, so far at least as it can be established on British soil. I have been charged to announce to Your Excellency this important and decisive step of our fight for the liberation of our country.

'Having in mind the fact that the free Czechoslovak Nation itself will in full freedom fix all that is necessary for the re-establishment of the final organisation of the State after the end of the war, we have decided to constitute this provisional system of the State organisation as follows:

1. President of the Republic:
   Dr. Eduard Beneš, second President of the Czechoslovak Republic
2. Prime Minister:
   Dr. Jan Šrámek, the former Czechoslovak Deputy Prime Minister

   Members of the Government:*

Jan Bečko	Stefan Osuský
L. Feierabend	Eduard Outrata
General S. Ingr	Pauliny-Tóth or J. Lichner
Jan Masaryk	Hubert Ripka
Jaromír Nečas	Juraj Slávik
František Němec	General Rudolf Viest

3. Czechoslovak State Council: This will be established as a kind of provisional Parliament and will consist of representatives of the most important political and social tendencies in our country. It will act as a consultative and controlling organ, the activity and competence of which will be defined by special decree of the President of the Republic in agreement with the Government.

'Announcing these facts to Your Excellency I wish, above all, to thank the British Government cordially for all the help which they have given to the Czechoslovak National Committee in its political and military activity from the beginning of the war. Special gratitude is due to His Majesty's Government for their attitude after the events of March 15th, 1939, when they categorically refused to recognise the occupation of our country and continued to recognise our Czechoslovak Legation in its

*The Ministries to which they were allotted are given on p. 112 (Tr.).

political and legal privileges as well as the other legal Czechoslovak authorities in countries subordinated to the competence of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. By so doing, they have solemnly emphasized the political and legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic.

'In establishing the Provisional Czechoslovak Government we therefore are continuing and building our State structure on the basis which has been preserved by the far-sighted policy and generous attitude of His Majesty's Government, animated by a sublime sense of justice and respect for international law and the sacred rights of the Nations to freedom and independence.

'In this spirit I turn to Your Excellency with the request for the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government, and I assure you that our State will always be deeply grateful for the help which the great British Nation has given to the Czechoslovak people in its temporary subjugation and in its present sufferings and privations.'

On July 18th, 1940, Lord Halifax replied as follows:*

'In your letter of July 9th, you have kindly informed me that the Czechoslovak National Committee intends to establish a Provisional Czechoslovak Government in this country and that you have been charged with the task of announcing this to me and of asking His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to recognise this Provisional Czechoslovak Government composed of the persons the names of whom you mention in your letter.

'I have the pleasure to be able to reply that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are in principle ready to recognise the Provisional Czechoslovak Government so constituted and to facilitate its activity on the territory which is under the competence of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. His Majesty's Government have taken notice of the fact that this Provisional Government is to be a representative government of the Czech and Slovak people and that it is intended that also the Czechoslovak State Council, which you mention in your letter, will be of fully representative character and will include the recognised Czech and Slovak leaders abroad, as far as they have not been included in the Provisional Government.

'On communicating this to you, I would like to make it clear that His Majesty's Government, in approaching this act of recognition, do not intend to engage themselves in advance to the recognition or future support in the fixing of whatever future boundaries in Central Europe.

*Original English text not available (Tr.).

I would also like to mention that it cannot be presumed that His Majesty's Government necessarily share your conclusion, drawn in your letter: namely, that by their attitude after the events of March 15th, 1939, His Majesty's Government have taken any particular attitude concerning the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic. The acts of His Majesty's Government had the significance that they protested against the changes brought about in Czechoslovakia by German military action, and that they stressed that in their opinion these changes had no legal basis. The recognition of the Czechoslovak Legation in London was to signify this fact.

'By the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government there will arise, of course, some administrative, financial and other questions, which will have to be settled, e.g., the question of competence over the Czechoslovak military forces and over Czechoslovak non-military persons in this country and the question of the gold of the Czechoslovak National Bank. The competent London authorities will be glad to discuss these questions with you or your representatives, whenever it may be convenient to you. I would be glad to learn whether in your opinion the discussions of these questions should start already before the intended act of recognition or only after it.'

At the same time we reached agreement with the Foreign Office that I would take note of Lord Halifax's first answer in a special letter and that a public declaration of British recognition of the Czechoslovak Government would be issued.

This declaration was made by Winston Churchill himself in the House of Commons on July 23rd.[3] Two days previously, I had received a second letter from Lord Halifax as a further answer to mine of July 9th. It read as follows:

London July 21st, 1940

'YOUR EXCELLENCY,

In the light of exchanges of view which have taken place between us, I have the honour to inform you that, in response to the request of the Czechoslovak National Committee, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are happy to recognise and enter into relations with the Provisional Czechoslovak Government established by the Czechoslovak National Committee to function in this country. His Majesty's Government will be glad to discuss with the representatives of the Provisional Government certain questions arising out of this recognition which require settlement.

Sincerely yours,

(*Signed*) HALIFAX'

3. *The Creation of the Czechoslovak State Organisation Abroad*

This was the first big and important step in the field of international law for the nullification of Munich and the German occupation arising from it. We at once put into effect all necessary measures within the framework of our political emigration and Army. As far as the restrictions of exile allowed, all laws, decrees, customs and administrative and other traditions of the First Republic became valid at once. Constitutional laws, especially, were fully respected from the outset as well as other laws as far as they could be applied abroad. The rights of the Czechoslovak Parliament were divided between the President, the Government and the State Council on the basis of existing conditions abroad and on the principle that every change of the constitutional or any other law must be only temporary for the period of the war and applied so as to come as near as possible to the spirit and letter of the Constitution and of home legislation. Where full continuity could be applied at once, it had to be applied without exception.

We naturally presumed that all our resistance activities would be submitted for approval at home after the war, and that, after revision in the light of conditions at home, they would receive political validity in post-war Czechoslovakia. We therefore decided that the principle of political and legal continuity of the Republic, beginning with the whole State structure must be applied systematically in the life of our emigrants, our citizens in exile and especially our Army.

By international act, I had again been recognised as President of the Republic in the sphere of international law. The Government and I had been recognised by the same act. *It was a great diplomatic success, a success in international politics,* that the Allies, as in the last war, had not only recognised our Government but at the same time the Head of the State. It was a great success in *internal* politics, and this meant a decisive consolidation of the emigration and Army and at the end of the war a *stabilisation of relationships till the end of the war.* And in our opinion it corresponded to our theory of the *legal continuity of the State,* of the invalidity of Munich and its consequences, the invalidity of my resignation as President and my departure from home—the invalidity in short of all that had happened to us after September 19th, 1938. The violation of the Munich Agreement by Germany and Hácha's signature to the protectorate in Berlin on March 15th, 1939, had in our view fully and automatically re-established the *status quo ante* Munich though this did not mean that we would simply revert to 1938 conditions at home after the war. To advocate another policy would *from the Czechoslovak point of view have been tantamount to treason.*[4]

When I resumed my Presidential functions which—on pressure from Berlin—I had to resign immediately after Munich,* I considered it my duty that my first act as President of the Republic should be the formal nomination of the new Government. In so doing I used the same procedure that had been observed by us in the historic Prague Castle during the twenty years before Munich throughout the terms of office of Masaryk and myself.

On the same evening,† therefore, I issued in the form of a letter, the following decree:

'Dear Doctor Šramek,‡

'I nominate you Prime Minister. At the same time I nominate as members of the Government the following Ministers and Secretaries of State:

Deputy Jan Bečko§	State Secretary in the Ministry for Social Welfare
Minister Dr. Ladislav Feierabend	Minister of State§
Divisional Gen. Sergěj Ingr	Minister of National Defence
Minister Jan Masaryk	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Minister Ing. Jaromir Nečas	Minister of State§
Deputy František Němec	Minister for Social Welfare
Minister Dr. Štefan Osuský	Minister of State§
Dr. Eduard Outrata	Minister of Finance
Dr. Pauliny-Tóth	State Secretary in the Ministry of Finance
Dr. Hubert Ripka	State Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Minister Dr. Juraj Slávik	Minister of the Interior
Divisional Gen. Rudolf Viest	State Secretary in the Ministry of National Defence

*See page 50 (Tr.).

†July 21st, 1940 (Tr.).

‡Monseigneur Šramek, a Czech, remained Prime Minister until the formation of the so-called Košice Government in April, 1945, when he was succeeded by Mr. Zdenek Fierlinger. After the Communist *coup d'état* in February, 1948, Dr. Šramek and a colleague, Mons. František Hala, Minister of Posts, were arrested when trying to board an aeroplane which would have taken them illegally to Paris. They were interned in a Monastery where Dr. Šrámek is believed to have remained till the present. Mons. Hala is believed to have died in 1952 (Tr.).

§ i.e. without portfolio. The prefix 'Minister' either indicated cabinet rank in a pre-Munich administration or the head of a Legation (Tr.).

'We are continuing in the tradition of the First Republic, the Republic of Masaryk, and are preparing a new Republic which will adapt itself now to the events of the war and to *the new conditions which will arise after the war*. I believe that we will all carry out our duties harmoniously, worthily and courageously. Our first task is to organise the Army and to wage war and then to order all our affairs abroad: the choice of representatives, the welfare of refugees and emigrants, the appointment of officials, etc. And in all our acts we must keep always before us the need to maintain and strengthen unity, harmony and peace among us.

'Above all, our care will be directed to the prosecution of the war. We will wage war against our oppressors and enemies together with all our allies—whosoever shall join them during the war—accepting all the consequences, without compromise and to final victory.

DR. ŠRAMEK (*Signed*) DR. EDUARD BENEŠ'

Four members of the Cabinet were clearly Leftist,* four can be considered as members of the Right Wing,† the rest belonged politically to the centre. Five Ministers had already been members of Czechoslovak Governments before the war. Three had been Czechoslovak envoys—in London, Paris and Warsaw.‡ Two had been Generals of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Army. Prime Minister Monseigneur Šrámek had been leader of the People's Party. He had been Minister many times and once Deputy Prime Minister. The Government consisted of eight Czechs and five Slovaks.[5]‖

Also on the same day I issued as President of the Republic another important decree concerning the establishment of a State Council as consultative organ for the Government and the President of the Republic. Later on October 15th, 1940, I issued the decree on the provisional execution of legislative power.

By these means the controlling and consultative functions of the State Council were fixed and it was established how legislation should be effected in our State organisation until the end of the war. As already mentioned, the establishment of the State Council was a direct consequence of the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government by the Government of Great Britain. It was agreed on my suggestion during the negotiations that, in the spirit of the democratic tradition of the First Republic, a political organisation should be constituted to unite our

*Bečko, Nečas, Němec, Ripka. (Tr.).

†Šrámek, Osuský, Pauliny-Tóth, Slávik. (Tr.).

‡Respectively Masaryk, Osuský and Slávik. (Tr.).

‖The Slovaks were Bečko, Osuský, Pauliny-Toth, Slávik and Viest. (Tr.).

whole political emigration and to exercise certain functions belonging to an elected chamber. For self-evident reasons it was impossible to establish on British soil a Parliament in the true sense of the word. We therefore had to replace it by an organ with limited competence, but sufficiently representative and able to act as a controlling and consultative factor with regard to the Government and to the State functionaries. Throughout the war, the State Council performed its duties well and it certainly did great service to our cause.[6]

On July 24th, 1940, three days after the British recognition, I broadcast from London my first political message to our country in my newly-recognised capacity. Appreciating the political and, from the international standpoint, legal importance of the recognition of the Government and the Czechoslovak Republic, I specially stressed that:

'Once again we have an internationally recognised new Government. Once again the international status of the Czechoslovak Republic has been recognised and again our State flag is legally flying everywhere in the world.

'Without recognising Munich or any of its consequences, we are advocating and will continue to advocate the principle that *the Czechoslovak Republic, the Republic of Masaryk, continued to live and exist even after Munich.* For that reason, our whole legal system still continues in the sphere of international law and politics. *For us, my departure from office and country has no legal validity. For us, there was legally no destruction of the Republic. For us nothing done in our country by Nazi violence after March 15th, 1939, has any political or legal validity.*

'I solemnly declare these to be our political and legal principles and I want to stress *that they are valid for all citizens of our State and of our Nation—for Czechs, Slovaks, Germans and Ruthenians and all others at home. Furthermore, I declare to be non-existent and illegal everything that we have been forced to do illegally and unconstitutionally since September, 1938.*

'You are not bound by any promises, obligations and oaths which have been extorted from you. Every one of you, every civil servant, functionary of State or local government, every soldier, gendarme, policeman, state or private employee, every citizen of the Republic who, in whatever office or function, is, directly or indirectly under obligation to the Nazi régime is today freed from such obligations so far as in his soul and conscience he has ever considered them to be binding. In the moment when he is again able to act freely, or when he is called upon by his free Government, he will act as a free man, as a true,

self-respecting, honourable and faithful citizen of the Czechoslovak Republic.

'When we began to organise for resistance abroad after Munich and when our soldiers began to assemble in Western Europe, that was an ebullition of our tortured humanity and of our national faith. It was the holy voice of our history which called aloud to us. *Therefore*, dear friends, *we are fighting and will go on fighting to the end.* Our past and our new future, Europe and the whole world and the whole history of mankind must see that in this fateful moment there are Czechs and Slovaks who did not submit and will not submit whatever happens. What is at stake is the Nation itself which is eternal—its honour, its dignity, its good name, its faithfulness to its own history.

'We have lived through two grave, fearful years. For a long while, we have been falling into the abyss and day after day heavy blows have rained upon us. *Today, the descent has ceased. We are starting upward again, we are on the way to victory.*'[1]

Immediately after the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government, Dr. Ripka and General Ingr started discussions with the British War and Air Ministries about the co-operation of our Army and Air Corps with the British Forces. Agreement was reached in the matters of the legal position of our Army, its technical organisation, its relations to British units and on the general question of its finances. The agreement was signed in the Foreign Office on October 25th, 1940, by Lord Halifax and Jan Masaryk.

At the same time there was signed in the name of the British and Czechoslovak Governments by Sir Kingsley Wood, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Dr. E. Outrata, Czechoslovak Minister of Finance, a special financial agreement regulating the financing of our forces during the war and the right to dispose of the Czechoslovak gold, deposited with the Bank of England before Munich.* The whole Czechoslovak political

*The gold in question appears to have been the £6,000,000 held by the Bank of England on Czechoslovak account at the time of the German occupation of Prague, March 15th, 1939. This gold automatically passed into German ownership when the Czechoslovak National Bank came under German control but was still in London when war broke out.

The agreement, which is dated December 10th, 1940—not October 25th, as stated in the text—has not been published. It provided, *inter al* (*a*) that the whole of the Czechoslovak National Bank gold should be placed at the disposal of the British Government for the prosecution of the Allied war effort and that for this purpose the gold should be sold by the Custodian of Enemy Property in the United Kingdom to the Bank of England for sterling and (*b*) that the Provisional Czechoslovak Government should hold the British Government, the Bank of England and the Custodian indemnified against any claim in respect of the gold in question (Tr.).

[1]

and military activity during World War II has therefore been financed from our own funds which had either remained at our disposal from the days of the Republic or which were procured during the war by means of loans. The agreement also regulated the preparations for Anglo-Czechoslovak co-operation for the reconstruction of economic life in the Republic after the end of the war.

These two agreements with the British Government afterwards normalised the whole of our political and military activity in Great Britain and put in legal, political and financial order every aspect of our future regular co-operation as an ally, both *de facto* and *de jure*.

For the second anniversary of Munich, September 30th, 1940, I arranged with the British Foreign Office for a message to be sent to our people at home on this subject. For the first time, I asked for a clear British declaration to the effect that the Munich 'Dictate' no longer existed and that future British policy would work for its complete annulment. I discussed the whole question with Bruce Lockhart, who, since our recognition, was the official British representative with our Government. Though my draft of the message was not accepted textually by the British Government, it was a substantial political step towards the realisation of our national aims. The address was delivered on the second anniversary of Munich by Winston Churchill himself, who said:

'Today is the second anniversary of the Munich Agreement, a date which the world will always remember for the tragic sacrifice made by the Czechoslovak people in the interest of European peace. The hopes which this agreement stirred in the heart of civilised mankind have been frustrated. Within six months the solemn pledges given by the unscrupulous men who control the destiny of Germany were broken and the agreement destroyed with a ruthlessness which unmasked the true nature of their reckless ambitions to the whole world.

'The protection which Hitler forced upon you has been a sham and a cloak for the incorporation of your once flourishing country in the so-called Greater Reich. Instead of protection he has brought you nothing but moral and material devastation, and today the followers of that great and tolerant humanitarian, President Masaryk, are being persecuted with a deliberate cruelty which has few parallels in modern history.

'In this hour of your martyrdom I send you this message. The battle which we in Britain are fighting today is not only our battle. It is also your battle, and, indeed, the battle of all Nations who prefer liberty to a soulless serfdom. It is the struggle of civilised Nations for the right to

live their own life in the manner of their own choosing. It represents man's instinctive defiance of tyranny and of an impersonal universe.

'Throughout history no European Nation has shown a greater will to survive than yours, and today again your people have given countless proofs of their courage in adversity. Here in Britain we have welcomed with pride and gratitude your soldiers and airmen who have come by daring escapes to take part with ever-increasing success in that battle for Britain which is also the battle for Czechoslovakia. And no less sincere is our admiration of those Czechs and Slovaks who on the home front are risking death, and worse than death, in order to foster resistance against a cruel and heartless oppressor.

'It is because we both are fighting for the fundamental decencies of human life that we are determined that neither our struggle nor your struggle shall be in vain. It is for this reason that we have refused to recognise any of the brutal conquests of Germany in Central Europe and elsewhere, that we have welcomed a Czechoslovak Provisional Government in this country, and that we have made the restoration of Czechoslovak liberties one of our principal war aims. With firmness and resolution, two qualities which our Nations share in equal measure, these aims will be achieved. Be of good cheer. The hour of your deliverance will come. The soul of freedom is deathless; it cannot, and will not, perish.'

4. *Crisis attacks our Army and our Emigration*

The months of June and July, 1940, were the most dramatic of our action abroad. To them belong the fall of France, the fight to rescue our Army in France and the decisive negotiations on the recognition of the Republic and the Government. Not since Munich had we experienced days and weeks of such tension. These were great and critical moments of the second resistance movement.

The fall of France had considerably demoralised a great part of our political emigration and a part of our army. The quarrels in our political action abroad—in the case of Dr. Osuský almost exclusively a personal one—were disguised by various petty political pretexts. They reached their climax in France at that time. Some French circles, seeing where events in France were heading from a military and political standpoint, were really fanning the flames of our difficulties and were making use of some of our people as informers and to split our ranks. The formation of dissident organisations under the title of a 'Czech' and a 'Slovak' National Council (as against the official Czechoslovak National Committee) on which they

were working from the beginning of 1940, served only to nurture and propagate these quarrels.[8]

When the fall of France and her capitulation became a reality, our people in France were engulfed in a political and military chaos the only escape from which was to go to Britain. But this way out was one of the most difficult and hazardous. The members of the Paris National Committee, our other functionaries and officials in France arrived in London in the second half of June, much affected psychologically by these military and political events. Most of them were deeply depressed and some, indeed, even believed that the war was already lost and that we had reached the end. In many respects, these events reminded me of what had happened during the first World War in Russia in 1917–1918.

In the first moments after the fall of France our Army was in rather bad shape. The composition of our forces in France was very uneven. A great part were Slovaks, who had lived for long years in France. Events in Slovakia had so confused many of them that they had no enthusiasm either for the Army or their military duties, even though the French military authorities had consented to their being received into our Army as Czechoslovak citizens. Fully 48 per cent of the troops who came to Britain were of the intelligentsia. A considerable percentage were Jews and at the beginning a small number also came from among our Germans.* Our officers were to a large extent young officers who had scarcely left the military academy. They were still inexperienced and quite unprepared psychologically for such abnormal conditions under which this partly voluntary, partly conscripted army lived and served. They were often unable to control fully and correctly such a heterogeneous unit with such very divergent ideas.

Furthermore, some of our officers possessed undemocratic tendencies. Here and there there were signs of anti-semitism; and the stories of German terror at home inevitably evoked in the Army fierce hatred of everything German. This naturally did not help to promote companionship with our German soldiers. Among the rank and file themselves, a considerable part was predominantly Socialist. There were also strong nationalist tendencies; later Communist tendencies manifested themselves too. Memories of Munich, of political fights at home—fights against political parties and individual politicians—further contributed to make the early period after the arrival of our troops in Britain a time of chaos, obscurity, disunion and sometimes even ideological derangement. The worst feature of all was that the Army, having been on the French front,

*The term 'Sudeten' is not recognised in Czechoslovakia (Tr.).

had undergone the difficulties of the evacuation and seen the terrible fall of the powerful French army. For a while it *felt itself to be part of that defeated army*. All this facilitated the disposition among the soldiers of a mood to listen to every kind of propaganda: German, Hungarian, defeatism, espionage. Such movements always had a political background. Moreover, on the part of some political circles—after the conclusion of the German-Soviet treaty—such activities were extremely penetrating. I think that the time has not yet come to occupy oneself in detail with all these cases, which in any event were not numerous, and to analyse them politically.*

This deeply influenced the morale of our soldiers who had come over to England. In short: *our Army, which had arrived in Great Britain, was experiencing a deep spiritual and moral crisis*. Indeed, that we only got half of our division from France to Great Britain, was partly due to the fact that some of our soldiers, considering the fight either lost or finished, saw no reason for further service. A number of them therefore—to their own loss—simply refused to leave France.

The most serious aspect of the matter was that a small section of soldiers who had been evacuated to England thought along similar lines when it arrived. This group provoked crises and quarrels. It lacked discipline and often excused itself (whether rightly or wrongly) by complaints about fascism and anti-semitism in our Army. Finally, this section refused to continue its military service and asked for its discharge. It should be added that identical or similar signs manifested themselves to the same or even a greater extent in the French, Belgian and especially the Polish forces in Britain. So far as we were concerned it constituted a serious crisis—the most difficult we had to experience in our Army in World War II.

I visited our soldiers immediately after their arrival in England, ascertained their situation, heard their complaints and tried to settle all difficulties amicably and by persuasion. But finally I was forced to proceed somewhat more resolutely. I gave permission to General Ingr to expel from our camp—from contact with those of our soldiers who were continuing to serve—all who refused to obey my call to fulfil their patriotic and military duties. We also agreed to the proposal of the British authorities that they should be segregated for a time in a special camp. Some of these soldiers were soon afterwards admitted into the British Pioneer Corps, but the greater part of them rejoined our Army in the following two years, after having thoroughly sobered down from these

*Until Hitler attacked the U.S.S.R., Czech and Slovak Communists opposed participation in the 'capitalist' war. A good many of them were sent to prison for subversive activities (Tr.).

aberrations or misunderstanding, and performed their military service excellently afterwards.

For a long time we were worried by the so-called 'officers' crisis'. This lasted in an acute form from the time of the arrival of our forces in Great Britain into the first half of 1943. The reason was, simply, that there were too many officers in proportion to the number of men. These officers—there were more than 400—could not get their proper rank in a less numerous military unit and therefore had to serve as simple soldiers and be treated and paid accordingly. The Poles, French, Belgians and others had the same problem. Everyone will understand that, humanly speaking, these officers were called upon for a great and continuous effort of self-denial and sacrifice. There were, of course, quarrels (especially as to who should and who should not be confirmed as officers), complaints, dissatisfaction, opposition to the leaders and eventually to the Government and the Ministry of National Defence.

All possible ways were tried to solve this crisis, but none brought satisfaction because every solution meant increased expenditure to which the British Government did not want to consent. So there were demonstrations of dissatisfaction among the officers which sometimes fell not far short of being serious violations of military discipline. There were even collective demonstrations which could have been termed 'plotting' and 'mutiny' against the Ministry or the Government. It was therefore sometimes necessary to intervene energetically and—in spite of my understanding of such manifestations of moral or material dissatisfaction—rather severely.

Regularly all such occurrences took a political colouring either in the Army itself or in the political emigration. The 'opposition' and the malcontents among the political emigrants used them as a weapon against the Government or against the Minister of National Defence. People in our movement who were really seditious, for political or other reasons, also tried to gain ground for their aims in this sphere. The greatest danger was, of course, that such things were apt to place our whole Army and our movement in an unfavourable light before the British and the other Allies.

Thus there was much trouble and pain and many difficulties. It was finally overcome in 1942 and 1943, partly through the arrival of new soldiers, and partly by the reorganisation and the new duties of the whole unit and also by a change in the attitude of the British authorities to some of our demands.

For me, these moments in June and July, 1940, were rather critical and painful. I was just negotiating for the recognition of our Government and

some of our newly-arrived soldiers were manifesting these moral and psychological symptoms! Happily, the overwhelming majority of the others soon showed their good qualities, and the airmen, without exception, behaved well, and participated immediately after their arrival in preparations for the Battle of Britain. However, similar sights could be seen in the other exiled armies on a much larger scale, so that these events ended without any great *political* consequences for us. But it must be said that *for the moment* this crisis gave quite a shock to the whole of our movement.

Finally, there were specially great difficulties over the formation of the Government. I had taken upon me the task—partly in accordance with the wish of the British Government, partly in order to keep as far as possible in line with conditions at home—to form a National Government which would be accepted and recognised by all. But I did not want to recognise the old party system lock, stock and barrel with all that this entailed. This was partly because the Army strongly disliked it, but also partly because I should not only have been involved in unending quarrels, but in addition, at the very outset of our action abroad, should have brought some unsavoury aspects of party strife at home into the whole political system erected outside our frontiers. But this meant that for a number of matters, activities and duties I had neither criteria, nor guide-posts so that I often had to take decisions myself—almost on an authoritarian basis—simply on my own opinion and judgment. Accordingly, in the spirit of the well-known and reprehensible practice of the First Republic, I was made personally responsible for everything and so there was a perpetual recrudescence of those pernicious and unpatriotic manifestations of bad party manners which we had experienced at home. When some people were personally dissatisfied with something, or when they wanted to extort something for their personal benefit, they used to threaten or attack me (sometimes with extreme lack of decency or political propriety) and thus disorganise the whole movement from above. *At the outset*, this was a rather common practice on the part of all dissatisfied persons in our political emigration. Later, it vanished nearly everywhere.

Even more important was the fact that in this question I also had considerable difficulties with the British Government. Without proper regard to the real conditions in our emigration and at home, they imposed on me the condition that a provisional Government would only be recognised *if I secured full unity of all our political currents and, of course, also those of the Slovaks*. I endeavoured to reach this impartially and impersonally. At that time it was a superhumanly difficult task. Some things I

refused to do in spite of everything. The British only began to trust us fully when they themselves realised how subversive and selfish some of our emigrants were, how full of hatred, and withal politically inept or mistaken or quite incapable of co-operation. In some cases I myself considered the things done by them in exile at that time to be criminal and treasonable. For example, in July, 1940, a few days before our recognition by the British Government, some of our people who had just arrived from France where they had been doing their best to wreck our prospects, sent a memorandum to the Foreign Office declaring that I represented practically nothing and nobody and that I and our Government ought not to be recognised. Later on, some of our people repeated these intrigues with the object of preventing our getting full and definitive recognition, especially from the Government of the United States.

Be that as it may, in July, 1940, the moment arrived when the decisive step in all our work abroad was to be taken. And *at that moment* there were among us a certain number of people who disrupted, quarrelled, pursued their own selfish interests, intrigued, when such tragic and at the same time decisive events were in progress as the Fall of France and the arrival of our army and emigration in London! The slightest nervousness, intrigue and unpatriotic action could, in those uncertain times, have overthrown everything, or at least delayed it. The whole discussions on the formation of our Cabinet and the future consolidation of our movement were, therefore, extremely strained and in a sense nervous and unsure. In the end we were able to achieve all these aims but only with the utmost nervous exertion and with the utmost of our endeavours.

When, at last, the formation and recognition of the Government was announced on July 21st, I breathed again. The greatest obstacles existing hitherto had been overcome. The way to the consolidation of the Army, the emigration and our whole movement was open. It was not the end to difficulties, quarrels and political intrigues. These continued for two more years, the so-called Czechoslovak 'opposition' relying even at that early stage on the support, including the financial support, of official and unofficial *Polish* circles. This went on for as long as our recognition was not yet fully accorded by all the Allies, especially the United States. More accurately, it continued almost to the end of the war, when fresh differences arose between us and the London Poles with regard to the policy to be adopted towards the Soviet Union. The intention was to undermine the position of our Government and prevent our whole system from ever being consolidated. But the recognition of the Government in July, 1940, was the end of the most difficult and most uncertain period of our work abroad.

5. *Full Recognition of Czechoslovakia by Great Britain*

After the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government on July 21st, 1940, our political and military activity on British soil moved rapidly and on the whole successfully. We soon had organised a civil and military administration in London and a complete diplomatic service in the rest of the world. Then we at once set ourselves the following important and concrete tasks: to transform 'provisional' recognition into a *definitive one*, thus regaining our pre-Munich international status and equality in international law with all the other independent allied States. And then, above all, the second task: *the revocation of Munich.*

Our State and national organism was functioning normally, so to speak, from October 28th, 1940, when after two years of German oppression we again celebrated our State Holiday and Independence Day freely on British soil with new hopes for the future and with the same ceremonies as we had celebrated it in Prague Castle during the twenty years of the First Republic. Even so, and despite the recognition of the Government—because it was merely 'provisional' recognition—the international and diplomatic position of the Czechoslovak Republic remained equivocal in some respects. We had to cope with this fact daily. Differences of status kept cropping up between the position of Czechoslovakia and that of the other allied States.

From the beginning of 1941, therefore, we began to discuss these questions with the British Foreign Office which soon agreed that it was necessary to put an end to uncertainties and discriminations and introduce a definitive legal order into our whole position. Essentially this meant the *legal* removal of the consequences of the Munich treaty and the German Occupation.

To secure this, it was necessary to achieve recognition of the following facts:

(*a*) The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic must be placed on the same legal basis as other allied Governments-in-exile and the Republic must get the same international status as before the crisis of 1938.

(*b*) In view of other political and military developments both in the world as a whole and in Czechoslovakia the 'provisional' period of the Czechoslovak Government was coming to an end because the whole population in the Czech Lands and perhaps about 80 per cent in Slovakia had identified themselves unconditionally with the Allies against Germany and with the Czechoslovak Government in London.

(*c*) The logical consequence of these two facts both legally and politically must be accepted: the unrecognised so-called Government of President Hácha in Prague was non-existent according to international law. In Prague, Hitler and his administration governed *de facto*, not any Czech government-in-captivity. In any case, neither the Protectorate itself nor any Czech Protectorate Government had been recognised legally by the British Empire or other allied and neutral states.

(*d*) Similarly in international law there did not exist an independent Slovakia because the so-called Slovak Government had not been recognised by any of the Allies and was substantially in the hands of Germany. According to international law therefore the separation of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia from the Czech Provinces did not exist so far as the Allies and ourselves were concerned.

A discussion which the Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk and I had with Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden on April 10th, 1941,* was conducted in this spirit. We discussed general international and military questions and agreed that the German campaign in the Balkans and the Mediterranean and the one which was imminent in the Near East with its direct or indirect menace to the Soviet Union in its later phases must have far-reaching effects on the international situation. We stressed to Eden that at this precise moment and in these circumstances, it might well have great importance for other countries if the Czechoslovak question were taken a step further. The smaller nations which were attacked would see in this very act what were the present and future aims of British policy. Thus Britain's determination to liberate Europe from Nazi oppression would again be confirmed and stressed.

On April 18th, 1941, I handed Eden a memorandum on these lines, stressing the following points, among others:

(*a*) Full diplomatic recognition *de jure* for the Czechoslovak Government, thus solving the question of the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic.

(*b*) The appointment as a consequence of this recognition of a British Minister Plenipotentiary to the Czechoslovak President and Government and a Czechoslovak Minister to the King and the British Government. (Up to this time there had only been a British 'delegate'—Bruce Lockhart.)

(*c*) The Czechoslovak Republic, its President and Government to receive the same legal and political status from the standpoint of international law as the other fully recognised allied Governments in London.

*Mr. Eden succeeded Lord Halifax as Foreign Minister on December 23rd, 1940.

(*d*) The officially recognised titles to be used in future: the Czechoslovak Republic, the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, the Legation of the Czechoslovak Republic. All future agreements signed with the Czechoslovak Republic to be concluded in the name of the Czechoslovak Republic, as before September, 1938.

(*e*) The provisional character of the Czechoslovak Government to be regarded in future as an *internal* affair of Czechoslovak democracy, signifying that the existing Czechoslovak Government would immediately after the war conform to the rules of the democratic Czechoslovak Constitution. Meanwhile, from the international standpoint the Czechoslovak Government to cease to be provisional.

In May and June, 1941, these questions were frequently discussed between us. There emerged difficulties both of a political and a legal character. In some British circles there was hesitation arising from the growing list of German victories, the uncertainty of the international situation and the rapid changes in Central Europe, in Germany itself and especially in the Soviet Union, whose entrance into the war we had been confidently expecting since January and February, 1941, in spite of the scepticism of the British and all around us. (I had had reliable reports of German preparations for the attack on Russia as early as January, 1941.)* But at last, by the end of June, after repeated interventions and discussions with the Foreign Office, *all our negotiations for full recognition were successfully concluded.* When, after the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, we embarked at the beginning of July on a swift and successful discussion of our affairs with Russia, the British War Cabinet during the first half of July decided to take the necessary legal steps to regulate the whole of our problem. On July 18th, 1941, Minister Anthony Eden called for Jan Masaryk and handed him the following Note:†

Foreign Office, S.W.1,
July 18th, 1941

DEAR MINISTER,

In a memorandum delivered on April 18th to Mr. Lockhart for His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, Dr. Beneš formulated demands in the matter of Anglo-Czechoslovak relations.

These demands were discussed also on the basis of a further letter from Dr. Beneš of May 28th and the exchange of views which followed

*See pp. 147–150 (Tr.).
†Original English text not available (Tr.).

especially with regard to the present situation in Czechoslovakia. I am sincerely glad that in consequence I am now able to inform you that His Majesty the King has decided to accredit an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary with Dr. Beneš as President of the Czechoslovak Republic. And His Majesty's Government will welcome a similar nomination if the Czechoslovak Government wishes to take such a step.[10]

This decision further signifies that His Majesty's Government now consider the legal position of the President and Government of the Czechoslovak Republic to be identical with the position of the other allied Heads of State and Governments now residing in this country and that in future in the official designation of the Czechoslovak State Organisation the terms Czechoslovak Republic, President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, Legation of the Czechoslovak Republic, etc., will be used. His Majesty's Government also accept that agreements concluded in future with your Government shall be negotiated in the name of the Czechoslovak Republic.

His Majesty's Government have taken note of the communication contained in paragraph II, 6 of Dr. Beneš's memorandum of April 18th, that the 'provisional' nature of the Czechoslovak Government shall in future be understood only as an internal matter of Czechoslovak democracy and that the term signifies that the present Czechoslovak Government will immediately after the war conform to the enactments of the democratic Czechoslovak Constitution.

The memorandum of Dr. Beneš of April 18th, has also raised the question of the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic. The arguments developed in the memorandum show this to be a somewhat complicated question. The attitude of His Majesty's Government was expressed in the letter of my predecessor to Dr. Beneš, of July 18th, 1940, and His Majesty's Government wish to leave this question for subsequent consideration at the appropriate moment.

To prevent a possible misunderstanding, I beg to inform you that His Majesty's Government maintain the view expressed in my predecessor's letter in the matter of territorial questions, that is to say, they undertake no obligation by the present Note to recognise or to support any future frontiers whatsoever in Central Europe.

To His Excellency
Mr. Jan Masaryk, C.B.E.

I am, yours sincerely,
(*Signed*) ANTHONY EDEN

From the point of international law and international politics this British Note was of great importance for Czechoslovakia. Even if it did not expressly accept our point of view of the Republic's legal continuity and of our pre-Munich frontiers, it fully opened the way for a solution of both these questions in future discussions and it definitely restored to the Republic its full former international status. This was most important at that moment. In the matter of frontiers, too, we were placed in the same position as all other Central European States—including allied ones, such as Poland and Yugoslavia. At that time the British Government took the line—and later reaffirmed its attitude to the United States—that frontier questions must be decided *definitely and jointly* only at the Peace Conference.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

[1]Eden's answer read as follows:*

'London, June 19th, 1940.

'DEAR FRIEND,

'I am really grateful for your letter of June 18th as I am well aware of the necessity of preserving your National Army, especially in so critical a time. The present situation in France makes the question of the evacuation extremely pressing.

'Yesterday and today I have undertaken everything possible to carry out this evacuation. The Foreign Office has given instructions to our Ambassador to contact Gen. Ingr for organising the greatest possible evacuation and the Admiralty has carried out all necessary measures. The Ambassador has also been instructed to try to reach agreement with the French for evacuation of the Czech Division from one of the Mediterranean ports.

'As long as the situation in France remains so unstable, one, unfortunately, cannot foresee how far these measures will be successful. But be assured that we will do all in our power to fetch your National Army to Britain.'

[2]This address is printed in my book *Six Years in Exile and the Second World War*,† on pp. 84-87.

[3]This declaration is printed in the Appendix.

[4]I therefore considered, and I still consider, as nothing else than treason the action of some of our emigrants who for mere personal reasons afterwards propagated among our political emigration and in our Army—and even among the British and Americans—the 'theory' that I was not the 'legal' President, thereby seeking to hinder the normalisation and consolidation of our conditions abroad *vis-à-vis* our own people and the Allies. I hold

*Original not available.

†Not available in English (Tr.).

this opinion the more strongly because these people while trying to mould events in accordance with their own calculations and while hoping for developments which accorded with their wishes and opinions, had nevertheless recognised our new legal and political situation by their acts and had even been ready to accept *various positions and offices at my hands as President of the Republic.*

[5]Later, another Minister of State was nominated: Jan Lichner.* Dr. Pauliny-Toth did not take office.

[6](*a*) The Decree of the President of the Republic of July 21st, 1940, on the establishment of a State Council as an advisory body of the Provisional State Organisation of the Czechoslovak Republic, read as follows:

Paragraph One

A State Council is hereby established as an advisory body to the President of the Republic and as an auxiliary organ of control within the Provisional State Organisation of the Czechoslovak Republic.

Paragraph Two

The State Council has a maximum of 40 members, nominated individually by the President of the Republic for a term of one year. The mandate of a member of the State Council lasts for this time unless it is withdrawn at the instance of the President of Republic or of the State Council itself on a proposal of the Discipline Committee (Paragraph 8), or unless the member himself resigns it.

Paragraph Three

An official of the Movement abroad or a member of the forces who is nominated member of the State Council shall, if he accepts the mandate, be granted indefinite leave by his superior officer in order to be able to perform his functions.

Paragraph Four

The Chairman and three Vice-Chairmen of the State Council are appointed by the President of the Republic. The President calls and closes the sessions of the State Council. A member of the State Council has the right to take part in its deliberations only after having notified the President of the Republic that he accepts the mandate and having taken the following oath in writing.

'I promise on my honour and conscience to be faithful to the Czechoslovak Republic and its provisional State Organisation recognised on the soil of our Ally, Great Britain, and I promise to carry out my duties conscientiously and impartially, to fulfil the tasks which the common fight for the complete liberation of our country imposes upon a member of the State Council, and to persevere in the war against Nazism and its accomplices till final victory.'

Paragraph Five

To the President of the Republic appertains the final approval of the Rules of Procedure agreed upon by the State Council, and the approval of later changes and amendments.

*Also a Slovak (Tr.).

Paragraph Six

A member of the State Council, if also a member of the Government, may exercise his right of membership in the State Council, but shall abstain from voting. The Chairman of the State Council has the right to invite members of the Government to take part in meetings in order that they can give any explanations asked for by members of the State Council.

Paragraph Seven

The State Council is bound to give to the President of the Republic or to the Government within a fixed time an advisory report on any question or matter put before it by the President of the Republic or the Government, but it can also on its own initiative report to the President of the Republic or the Government on all branches of State activity.

Paragraph Eight

On the proposal of the Discipline Committee, the State Council can cancel the mandate of a member if it reaches the conclusion that he is unworthy. It has the duty to report such decision without delay to the President of the Republic.

Paragraph Nine

The members of the State Council shall receive due compensation* for performing their duties.

Signed: Signed:
Dr. Šramek Dr. Eduard Beneš

(*b*) The Decree of the President of the Republic of October 15th, 1940, on the provisional execution of legislative power, read as follows:

At the suggestion of the Government I decree:

Paragraph One

As long as it shall not be possible to carry out the provisions of the second chapter of the Constitution of February 29th, 1920, on the legislative power, the President of the Republic shall with the approval of the Government perform the tasks imposed on him by paragraph 64, sections 1 and 3 of the Constitution for which the consent of the National Assembly is necessary.

Paragraph Two

Regulations, the purpose of which is to change or annul existing laws or to make new ones shall, during the life-time of the Provisional State Organisation be issued whenever necessary by the President of the Republic on the proposal of the Government in the form of Decrees which shall be countersigned by the Prime Minister or the Minister entrusted with this execution.

Paragraph Three

The entire Government is entrusted with the execution of this decree which enters into force on the day of its signature. Signed in London by the President of the Republic on October 15th, 1940.

Signed: Signed:
Dr. Šramek. Dr. Eduard Beneš

*Their salary was £600 a year, free of tax (Tr.).

[7]The full text of this address is printed in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 88-92.

[8]The whole scheme was inspired and led by Dr. Milan Hodža* who wanted in this way to secure his membership in the National Committee and in the forthcoming London Government as he himself personally confessed to me. An overwhelming majority of the members of the London Government, the State Council and our emigration were opposed to him at that time. Only with the greatest effort did I finally succeed in getting their consent to my nominating Dr. M. Hodža as a member of the State Council and as one of its vice-Chairmen. The intention was to bring him officially into the ranks of the liberation movement. He accepted the nomination but never carried out his mandate.

[9]Further details of all these negotiations are given in *E. Beneš: Studies and Essays presented on his Sixtieth Birthday*† (Prague, 1947, J. R. Vilímek) in the article by R. H. Bruce Lockhart: 'Some Private Recollections.' Lockhart took a very active part in these negotiations.

[10]On the British side, Mr. Philip B. B. Nichols was nominated and on our side, Dr. Max Lobkowicz.

*Dr. Hodža, a Slovak Protestant, was Prime Minister before Munich. After his quarrel with Dr. Beneš he went to America where he died in 1944.

†Not available in English (Tr.).

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT CHANGE IN THE WORLD WAR: THE SOVIET UNION, ATTACKED BY GERMANY, PARTICIPATES IN THE STRUGGLE

1. *Volte Face in Soviet Policy*

NAZI Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, begun by Hitler on Sunday, June 22nd, 1941, fundamentally changed the whole international and military situation in Europe and the world.

I do not intend to examine here *in detail* the policy of the Soviet Union from Munich to the beginning of the German-Soviet War. I will mention only the most necessary facts. Even today it is still a delicate question. The events preceding Munich and between Munich and the Soviet Union's entry into World War II have been used, and in a certain sense also misused, against Soviet policy both before and after Munich. I will only repeat that before Munich the Soviet Union was prepared to fulfil its treaty with France and with Czechoslovakia in the case of a German attack.*

The treaty between the four Western and Central European Great Powers concluded in Munich on September 29th, 1938, was quite rightly considered by the Soviet Government to be not only a desertion of Czechoslovakia but also a desertion of the whole European policy of collective security founded on the Geneva obligations of France and Great Britain. Moreover the exclusion of the Soviet Union from all pre- and post-Munich discussions was equivalent—in the Soviet view—to an attack against the Soviet Union and to an attempt to secure its complete isolation. Moscow *rightly* feared that this fatal step could soon lead to a military attack by Germany against the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, the Soviet Union interpreted the Munich policy of France and Great Britain as a voluntary surrender by these States of their traditional influence in Central Europe—as the abandonment of the Central European sphere to the exclusive influence of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy the logical inference being that Hitler's Germany was being put face to face with the Soviet Union. In view of the ideology of the Nazi Third Reich it seemed that the inevitable conflict with the Communist Soviet Union would not be long delayed. Already at the time of the

* The U.S.S.R. was not obliged to go to war with Germany on Czechoslovakia's behalf unless France did so. (Tr.).

Munich crisis the League of Nations had clearly shown that it was non-existent as a political force and equally clearly the Western Powers no longer took it into account. Indeed, Chamberlain had already said as much in the House of Commons on March 8th, 1938.

For this reason I did not turn to the League of Nations before Munich—to the surprise of some of our friends in France and Great Britain. I was afraid I should damage rather than help the Czechoslovak cause by doing so. I simply did not believe that France and Great Britain, in the condition they were then in, would back our anti-Nazi policy in Geneva. On the contrary I feared that they would permit a solution—*a legal one confirmed moreover by an international institution*—which might later prove a serious and indeed fatal stumbling block for our cause if Germany used it to the full against us. I therefore decided not to risk such a step which could have reversed the whole future course of events to our complete disadvantage.

Thus, in my opinion, the Soviet Union no more than ourselves could expect anything from Geneva in the sphere of collective security. Developments before and after Munich—the recognition of the Italian Empire in Africa by Great Britain and France, acceptance of the occupation of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania with only platonic protests—were clear proof that France and Great Britain had fully capitulated to Germany and Italy and that they had simply—though not formally—accepted, and in fact recognised, the Italo-German claims in Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe.

The immediate question for all Europe, therefore, and especially for the Soviet Union, was: what would be Germany's next move after Munich. Logically, its quarrel with Poland for the so-called Danzig Corridor came first and this again brought up the question of how this problem would affect the policy of France and Great Britain. For the Soviet Union this question meant a fresh decision about the direction of its future policy and the definite crystallization of its final reaction to the whole European crisis.

The diplomatic archives on this fatally decisive moment of European and world policy are not yet *fully* accessible so that a historically *exact and documented* answer cannot yet be given to the relevant questions which at present can only be considered on the basis of somewhat unclear or uncertain assumptions. I myself will only record what I have either lived through myself and therefore know for certain, or at any rate believe I know for certain, or what I deduce logically from facts already known. I do not assert that these facts are either complete or fully decisive. I am not giving the complete history *but only making a contribution to it.*

As I judged the situation at the time, France, even after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, was resolved not to resist Germany and to leave Poland also to its fate. This is shown by the fundamental turn given to French policy by Prime Minister Daladier after April 10th, 1938, when after a comprehensive discussion and review of French foreign policy with J. Paul-Boncour he refused to admit him into his Government and nominated Georges Bonnet as Minister for Foreign Affairs.[1] On the other hand, Great Britain began to prepare for resistance with some vigour soon after Munich and later, shortly after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, she concluded guarantee defence treaties with Poland, Rumania and Greece.

In these circumstances, the Soviet Union was uncertain either of the future path of French policy or of a firm and unwavering British policy, although it was—seemingly—directed against the expansion of Hitlerism. So it decided to follow a policy which would bring the greatest *momentary* security to itself and which would grant it the greatest possible freedom of deciding its future behaviour in accordance with its own interests and the march of events. In the existing state of uncertainty this meant boldly carrying on negotiations on two different fronts—with the Western Powers and Germany at the same time or first with one and then with the other—as happened at the beginning of the summer of 1939.

The new policy was inaugurated by a change in the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs: 'Tass' announced on May 4th, 1939, that Litvinov had at his own request resigned as Commissar for Foreign Affairs and that he had been succeeded by the President of the Council of People's Commissars, Viatcheslav Molotov. France and Great Britain were then offered an agreement based on a clear and decisive policy to stop German expansion on condition that, in the case of a conflict with Germany, the Soviet Union was to be allowed to occupy the Baltic States and its Army would be granted the right of passage through Polish territory. On these terms the Soviet Union was ready to participate with all its strength in a future conflict with Germany.

I do not wish at this stage to go into the question whether one or the other party to these negotiations had some special motive and plans or whether either of them was sincere or insincere. It is known that Moscow criticised the Western Powers for not sending sufficiently important personages to conduct the negotiations thus giving the impression and even the conviction that these Powers did not seriously want a treaty with the Soviet Union against Hitlerite aggressiveness. I am only concerned with hard facts and the results of the negotiations.

Poland which was—indirectly—a partner to these negotiations, cate-

gorically refused to consent to the demands of the Soviet Union regarding Poland and thus made an agreement between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union on this basis impossible. As I knew Col. Beck and the whole Polish regime, I had taken their attitude on this point for granted. In view of the Polish attitude the Soviet Union refused to accept an anti-German obligation of a nature which would not have enabled it to deploy all its forces for its full defence in the event of war. It therefore insisted on the conditions it had laid down. So, in the summer of 1939, the possibility of a firm agreement between the Western Powers, Poland and the Soviet Union with the object of decisively stopping Hitler's Germany from further European expansion had definitely ended.

I followed these negotiations—I was at that time in Chicago—with extreme anxiety. It was clear to me that they would determine how soon the European war would begin so that the fate of our country was also involved. From our point of view it was advantageous that the war—if it came—should break out soon and that the European 'marasmus,' during which the German occupation at home would work fearful moral and material destruction, should end as quickly as possible. In April, 1939, I got into touch with the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Umansky. During the following months I gave him detailed information based on my reports from Europe and especially from Germany and home, and I was in general kept well informed by him about the future policy of the Soviet Union during these negotiations. Umansky was the only Ambassador of the Great Powers in the United States who after Munich and even after March 15th, 1939, remained quite openly in contact with me and supported me whenever possible.

Just at that time there were negotiations about whether a Czechoslovak pavilion would be allowed at the New York Exhibition. This question gave rise to a small diplomatic battle. Our pavilion had been announced and prepared before the occupation of Czechoslovakia. The United States had not legally recognised our occupation ; they therefore consented to our pavilion being officially and ceremonially opened. The Mayor of New York, La Guardia, took the matter up and helped Envoy Hurban and me in every possible way and the pavilion was opened on May 31st, 1939. On that occasion, in agreement with Washington, I was still acting together with Minister Hurban in the capacity of an official Czechoslovak representative—to the great discomfiture of the diplomats of the European Powers. The State Department was officially represented at this function, but of the diplomatic corps only Umansky took part officially in the opening of our pavilion. On the same day he invited me personally and

received me himself when I paid a ceremonial visit to the Soviet pavilion. This caused a great sensation. And so far as we were concerned, of course, it served its purpose.

Shortly afterwards the Moscow negotiations for an anti-German treaty reached their dramatic culmination. As I have already mentioned, I had expected that nothing in the world would induce Minister Beck to yield to the Soviet demands in any form whatever especially as he already had the British guarantee treaty in his pocket. According to the British view the proposed anti-German treaty was in fact merely to involve the simple accession of the Soviet Union to the Anglo-Polish treaty of guarantee without any serious discussion of the more important Soviet demands and without conditions.

In another conversation with Umansky I again discussed these questions in detail. At his request I gave him a detailed written analysis for Moscow of the European situation *vis-à-vis* Germany and the negotiations between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers. Not long afterwards Umansky told me that he had received a telegram from Molotov to the effect that the negotiations between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union had definitely broken down.

I cannot say of my own personal knowledge by what means, on whose initiative and by what intermediary the negotiations which followed for the German-Soviet treaty of August, 1939, were undertaken. According to Stalin's declaration, the initiative for the negotiations and the project of a treaty came from the Germans. Already in May, 1939, my own attention had been drawn from Prague and from Moscow to *economic* negotiations between Germany and the Soviet Union. I received a message from Prague at Chicago that, soon after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, the Germans had seized the Škoda Works at Plzeň and found there all the documents concerning deliveries of armament material to the Soviet Union—to which as President of the State I had indirectly given my consent. They immediately decided not to interrupt these relations and to continue the deliveries. Soon afterwards I received information from Moscow that Ing. Hromadko of the Škoda Works had accordingly been sent to Moscow. Immediately afterwards I got reports originating from Hromadko himself, partly about conditions at home, partly about the Soviet-German economic negotiations.

Rightly or wrongly I drew very far-reaching conclusions from these indications. I foresaw the Soviet-French-British negotiations as definitely wrecked and I concluded that the Soviet Union would now take a quite independent political position based solely on what from the most realistic

standpoint it might regard as being of direct benefit *to itself* in the sense of promoting the security of *its own* State. Assuming that it was not sufficiently prepared for war, it would do what it could to put off being involved in war as long as possible—at the same time preparing for war as feverishly as possible. That was my estimate of the situation.

In addition, as I had a reasonably good knowledge of Soviet doctrine, ideology and practice, I was sure that it would not lose sight of *its own* final revolutionary aim and the *ultimate* aim of Communist principles, even if this should force it into seeming or real illogicalities in its procedure and even if its policy should give the West the impression either of oft-repeated '*salta mortale*' (i.e. unexpected, sudden and sensational changes of policy and tactics) or of a-moral Macchiavellism.

In short: *I reckoned that the Soviet Union, after the rejection of its clear offer of an anti-German treaty to preserve world peace (which it was ready to carry out), would first turn right away from the Western Allies and would temporarily, at least, sit on the fence as between the Western Powers and Hitlerite Germany.* From the point of view of the world the explanation would be simply the interest of the Soviet State. Ideologically and from the standpoint of international Communism the line would be that it was necessary in case of war to keep the way open for the subsequent social world revolution which—as Communists then held to be certain—would be joined even by the *German* proletariat. These were my conclusions at that time.

Thus, through a microscope, as it were, I followed step-by-step every development of Soviet policy, even the smallest. When I returned to London from America early in the morning of July 19th, 1939, General Ingr and Colonel František Moravec brought me news from Germany of very active negotiations between Germany and the Soviet Union. I ordered Colonel Moravec to take all possible steps to get more detailed reports about these negotiations from Germany.[2]

Between August 10th and 12th, 1939, we got further important reports through the same channels. So far as *Germany* was concerned the decisive moment in the Soviet-German negotiations was the night of 3rd to 4th August. That night a meeting took place in Berlin in the Foreign Office, in which Ribbentrop, Göring, Goebbels, Keitel, Jodl and others took part to decide whether Germany should accept and sign the treaty with the Soviet Union or not. Hitler was in Berchtesgaden and took part in the conference by telephone, being permanently connected with the room in which the conference was taking place and directly with those who took part in it getting at the same time a report on the discussions from Ribbentrop.

It emerged from these discussions that Berlin had not negotiated through its Ambassador in Moscow, Count Schulenburg, but had already sent a special negotiator to Moscow, Ing. Hilger (Commercial Attaché of the German Embassy in Moscow holding the rank of Counsellor). When the conference was held he had just returned from Moscow and he gave those present at the meeting in the Foreign Office conclusive reports on the position of the negotiations with the Soviet Union. The discussions lasted into the morning hours of August 4th with Hitler all the time participating by telephone. Finally Hitler agreed and the German negotiator was able to take his answer back to Moscow by plane on the same morning (August 4th).

Accordingly, from August 12th, 1939, when this report from Berlin reached me in London I was sure that in a short time the sensational news would be announced to the public that a German-Soviet agreement had been concluded. At the same time our intelligence service received—from the same German sources—detailed reports of the development of the conflict between Germany and Poland concerning Danzig. We got details of the concentration of armies, of diplomatic manoeuvres, propaganda tricks, etc. The moral of all these reports was, *be prepared—that the critical time would be August 26th-27th, when the German-Polish conflict would probably start.*

In these circumstances I resolved to visit the Soviet Ambassador in London, Ivan Maisky, as soon as possible and discuss all these questions with him. This was my first meeting with a man of incontestably high political qualities with whom, afterwards, I systematically maintained good political relations during the whole of the war and with whom—time and again at decisive moments—I sincerely exchanged opinions on the development of the general situation. We always helped one another in a friendly manner. On this first occasion I wrote to Maisky and asked him to receive me. He invited me to lunch and we had a long discussion at the Soviet Embassy. By a coincidence the invitation was for August 23rd, 1939, the same day in the morning of which the London newspapers sensationally announced the arrival of Ribbentrop in Moscow and published the contents of the German-Soviet treaty which was to be ostentatiously signed in Moscow by Ribbentrop.

As is known, this news came to the world like a bombshell. Known, too, are the passionate polemics, discussions, quarrels, interpretations and mutual recriminations which immediately afterwards reverberated through the world. The events round which these endless polemics ranged are for many not quite clear even today and at the time were extremely surprising and really sensational for the whole of the Western world and America.

2. *The German-Soviet Agreement and Its Consequences For Our Movement*

Throughout my first discussion with Maisky I myself took all these events for granted. I had already been informed of them by our intelligence service and I had had reports from Germany that we must count on a German-Polish conflict in a very short time. Keeping all the events of the preceding weeks in their logical sequence at the back of my mind, I concentrated in my discussions with Maisky on the future developments. The interpretation of the treaty, its meaning, motives, wisdom and competence —all these things no longer interested me so much and I did not express any judgment or opinion on them. For the time being it was decisive for me that this meant war against Poland—and therefore against Great Britain and France—by Hitler's Germany and that the events which I had predicted to Roosevelt in Washington three months previously had come to pass. The principal lesson, so far as I was concerned, was that we had reached *a great turning point in world policy, the beginning of the downfall of the whole Munich policy and particularly of Germany and that the real and fateful fight for our new liberty and existence was about to begin !*

The conversation with Maisky touched all these matters. We discussed them for a long time and from various points of view. When I left Maisky, I had formed several sufficiently clear conclusions and impressions:

(*a*) Maisky did not agree with my view that the German-Soviet treaty meant that the Germans wanted to start their war against Poland at once and that they were, to all intents and purposes, fully prepared for it. He regarded with suspicion my authentic reports from Germany about the near outbreak of war and believed that war would probably not begin at once. Neither France, nor Great Britain, he considered, would fight and Poland alone would not dare to do so. '*Probably there will be a second Munich :* France and Great Britain have forced one Munich on Europe at your expense, probably they will force another on Europe at the expense of Poland !' Such, as I gathered from the hints he let fall, was the opinion of Ivan Maisky at that moment. He was extremely sceptical of my view that Great Britain would not stand for a second Munich.

(*b*) He was very reserved about the future policy of the Soviet Union. He said nothing definite about what the Soviet Union would do if war broke out between the powers. But I gathered from his remarks that he thought events would *in the course of time force his country, too,* to take part in such a war. When and how, he declined to say. My impression when I left was that the Soviet Union would try to remain neutral as long as possible so that when the war was nearing its end with both sides ex-

hausted the Soviet Union could intervene decisively and bring about an automatic solution of European problems by means of social revolution.[1]

My conversation with Maisky was the second decisive conversation—after that with Roosevelt—which helped me to direct my whole policy in this war. I took it for granted that for a certain length of time we would have to be prepared for the neutrality of the Soviet Union. We would have to watch events carefully, give nothing away to anyone and be ready for a possible change later. From this standpoint I again confirmed my instructions given in my letter of June 26th, 1939, to Envoy Slávik while I was in America to the effect that our soldiers in Poland must be prepared to retreat into the Soviet Union in case of a Polish defeat and try to remain there until they should again be able to intervene.

Furthermore I understood the logic from the Soviet point of view when, shortly after the outbreak of the Polish war and the smashing of Poland by the 'Blitzkrieg', the Soviet Union decided to occupy the Eastern part of pre-war Poland and gradually to establish its military and strategic bases in the Baltic States. For me this was not merely a question of an occupation of territory claimed by the Soviet Union. Above all, it was the question of occupying advantageous positions which would as far as possible render the Soviet Union secure *in the event of its later participation in the world struggle.*

On September 19th, 1939, Maisky returned my visit at my Putney home and we again discussed the events of the preceding four dramatic weeks. The Soviet Army was already on the march into Lithuania and Eastern Galicia and Maisky wanted to know my impressions of the situation as I saw it from my British environment. He asked me, especially, how our people at home would regard the Soviet action. I did not conceal the fact that even though I personally was doing my best to view the Soviet's action with full understanding, at home its whole behaviour—especially the treaty with Germany—would have a very depressing effect. But at once I stressed to him the necessity for the Soviet Army reaching our frontier. 'Indeed, I do not know in detail', I added, 'how conditions will develop at home, but for the future it is necessary for the Soviet Union to remain the neighbour of ourselves and Hungary. After this new war we must be neighbours of the Soviet Union directly and permanently. *For us this is one of the lessons of Munich !* The question of Subcarpathian Ruthenia will be solved between us later and we surely will agree !'

We then examined the map together and Maisky assured me that it certainly would be the aim of the Soviet Union to establish itself somewhere on the line of our Slovak frontier because it was already concerned

about what Germany, Poland and Hungary might do later. 'However matters end we two will surely agree on our common frontiers at the end of the war without any noisy quarrels and without crises'—thus I closed this second conversation which only confirmed me in the conclusions I had drawn from my first conversation with Maisky.

This whole dramatic phase of Soviet policy left me, as can well be imagined, quite calm, though impatiently expectant, nor did it move me, in spite of the vehement and permanent polemics in public on its sense and substance.

Perhaps this is the proper place to recall an important moment of the discussions with our Communists during that period. When I went to Paris at the beginning of October, 1939, for the negotiations on the eventual establishment of the Czechoslovak Government and on the organisation of our Army on French soil—negotiations which, as I have recounted already, ended in almost complete failure—Deputy J. Šverma* visited me on October 10th, 1939. With him was to have come also Dr. Vl. Clementis, but the latter—as I was told at the time—had just been arrested by the French police and Šverma came alone, secretly, through a back entrance of the hotel because he, as well as I, was closely watched by the police. I knew him well. He was a valiant and resolute man and proved this by his whole behaviour during the war. In 1935—together with Deputy R. Slánský†—he had led the negotiations with me on behalf of the Communist Party about my first election as President.

He was quite well informed of the pre-war conditions in France in 1938 and 1939 and also of the conditions in our colony there. He saw my difficulties with the Daladier group and, on the ground that all was lost, tried to persuade me to leave the West and make my way to Russia. He linked our liberation exclusively with a great *revolutionary* victory of the Soviet Union and considered that I should also accept this orientation. He thought that it would be necessary to turn all our liberation activities in this direction. Shortly after this conversation he set out on his return home and then to the Soviet Union.

*Mr. Švermá lost his life during the Slovak rising in 1944. His widow, Marie Švermová, rose to the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party after the war. About 18 months after the Communist *coup-d'état* of February, 1948 she was denounced as a spy and arrested. Mr. Švermá's companion, Dr. Clementis, became Foreign Minister after Jan Masaryk's death in 1948. He was later sentenced to death as a spy. (Tr.).

†Later Secretary-General of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. In November, 1951, he was arrested on a charge of being a spy in the pay of Western imperialists. He was tried in November, 1952, and hanged a few days afterwards (Tr.).

I explained my view of the situation to him. I considered it essential not to leave the West and to ensure that while the Soviet Union was taking no active part in the war our whole movement in the West should accommodate itself to the situation and avoid the possibility of becoming split. For me, the question was to prepare and to secure at *whatever price the unity of our whole liberation movement.* He objected that conditions in the West would ultimately push me to the right wing—would estrange me from the Soviet Union and drag me into the waters of reaction. Against this opinion I stressed that it would be a mistake to leave matters in the West to our emigrants who were only aligned with Osuský, Hodža and others, that it was essential from the outset to give our whole liberation movement a correct progressive, all-national and uniting line, and of course a world line, too—that is to say, a Western and Eastern line simultaneously —because this second World War was already and would remain a world, and revolutionary, war and the Soviet Union would quite certainly be forced into it at a later stage. Moreover, we must not forget that we would very possibly be interested in maintaining co-operation between West and East in the final phases of the fight against Hitler.

Besides (I argued on), for me it was not a question of my personal situation. If conditions at the outset in France and Great Britain should develop in such a way that I should be forced to make concessions to people and to events which afterwards—when the Soviet Union in one way or another entered the war—could not be co-ordinated with developments either in the Soviet Union or at home and might threaten to split our whole national liberation movement, then I would be ready to stand aside and leave the leadership to others. It was not a question of securing for myself any personal position in the movement or in the new Republic after the war. For me, it was a question of State and Nation. For the time being I considered that my most important duty was to try to direct our cause so as to secure the unity of the whole liberation movement not only in Great Britain and France but also in *America and the Soviet Union and to preserve it in all circumstances.*

This conversation with Deputy Šverma brought home to me the difference between my estimate of the development of the war and that of *our* Communists under the influence of the *Russian* Communists. We were both convinced that the Soviet Union, in spite of signing the treaty with Germany, would enter the war. But the Communists seemed to believe that it would be possible to delay this till the very end of the war. Seemingly it was in order to be able to intervene only at the end of the war that the Soviet Union had signed the treaty with Germany—thus gaining time.

Further, it intended to intervene in a mainly, or even exclusively, revolutionary sense at the moment when both sides were too exhausted to defend themselves successfully against a social revolution. *In addition the Communists considered that at such a time they would in any case succeed in bringing about a revolution in Germany.*

For my part, though I did not entirely exclude this possibility, which was in line with the real political aims of Bolshevik doctrine and ideology, *I was more inclined to believe that the Soviet Union could be drawn into the conflict earlier by one side or the other, even against its will, and I therefore did not consider that its participation in the war was necessarily very far distant.* At the same time I also considered other eventualities including the question of what would happen if the whole doctrine of Communism were not fully implemented. *In particular I almost wholly ruled out the possibility of their succeeding in drawing the German workers into revolution especially in alliance with the workers of the other Nations.* For this reason I did not think that the participation of the Soviet Union in the war would only be *revolutionary*. I felt that whether it wished it or not, the Soviet Union's intervention would be on a military basis—that is to say it would take part in the war in pursuit of power just as any other State. I also anticipated *that the Soviet's endeavours to keep neutral as long as possible* would be very intense—and at the same time extremely difficult—and that the Soviet Union would have to make great sacrifices to Germany in order to maintain this policy.

In addition, I could not bring myself to believe that the Western Powers and Germany would not see through these calculations and act accordingly. It was certain that by now both were sufficiently acquainted with Communist theories, especially the Lenin-Stalin theory of imperialist war and proletarian revolution, *and that they would therefore make their own plans to prevent the realisation of these Communist aims.*

To me, this meant that one side or the other would do all it could *to push the Soviet Union into war as soon as possible in a way which would give them the greatest possible military advantage. That they would simply look on while the Soviet Union made its military preparations for a world social revolution, seemed to me highly improbable.* I also had the feeling that the Hitler regime was already shaping its internal policy on this basis and especially that it was doing its utmost to prevent the participation of the German workers in any kind of revolution. In fact, if Moscow let itself be lulled by this hope, it would perhaps have an unpleasant surprise later on.

I did not extend my discussion with Deputy Šverma to the details of all these questions but our conversation brought these problems and contin-

gencies clearly to my mind and, when I returned to London from Paris, I often used to return to these questions in my talks with Communists and Soviet diplomats in order to check whether my views were correct. I also realised that the Soviet Union's theories about the development of the war would have a decisive influence on the attitude of Communist Parties in the various States (e.g. in France) *and also on the attitude and ideology of our Communists at home and abroad in relation to the war.* It did not surprise me, therefore, when I got from home and elsewhere reports about the reserved, not to say negative, attitude of the Communists towards our national liberation movement during the first years of the war.

To these influences, opinions and calculations, perhaps even instructions, I imputed the decision of our London Communists in August and September, 1939, to retreat into the background—after having participated with considerable ardour in the initial stages of the fight for liberation—and to abstain from direct participation in our movement from the moment of the conclusion of the German-Soviet treaty. I attributed to the same causes the ever-increasing hostility of a section of our London and American Communists towards us. The latter soon afterwards began to stress the theory of imperialist war and to tar both the warring sides, the Western European and the German side, with the same brush. They put about the theory that our movement abroad waited on British imperialism and British capitalist war efforts, spoke of 'our common guilt' in the Munich capitulation and so on. At that time this section of our Communists also began to issue leaflets against us, in London. For example, on the pattern of British pamphlets against the British 'Men of Munich,' they issued a pamphlet 'Guilty Men of Czechoslovakia' in which they pilloried our so-called 'collaboration with Hitler' specifying not only that of Dr. Hácha but our whole movement abroad even including myself.

Similar reports soon began to reach me from my Prague friends[4] about Communist propaganda at home on the above lines. In particular, I received through underground channels some resolutions of the executive Committee of the Party published in their illegal Party newspaper and disseminated in Prague secretly, underground. From these resolutions of the underground leadership of the Party I noted that this particular Communist line reached its culmination at the end of 1940 and the beginning of 1941—six months before the Soviet Union was drawn into the war. Clearly the Communists did not as yet envisage a German attack on the Soviet Union. During the first months and years of the war the Executive Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party also seems to have accepted the erroneous belief of the Russian Communists that the Soviet

Union might be able to remain neutral for a long while—perhaps until the end of the war.* And, of course, it was also animated and actuated by the assumption that a world revolution would take place at the end of this 'imperialist conflict.'

On this basis and in line with Soviet directives, our Communist Party also worked out its moves in our internal policy and in relation to our whole liberation movement at home and abroad.[5] *It is true that it continued to resist Hitlerite Germany and also carried out, as far as it was able, its uncompromising resistance to the Germans at home.* But it kept its full independence, did not join other resistance groups at home and held aloof from our liberation movement abroad.

In my reports to the homeland, at that time and later, I warned our resistance groups not to let themselves be misled, but also wherever possible not to let this behaviour interrupt their co-operation with the Communists. On the contrary, they should re-establish relations and try to keep all-national unity at any price. I never excluded the probability that the Soviet Union would be drawn into the war comparatively soon and that then the Soviet Union—and with it our Communist Party—would be forced to change its attitude. When this actually happened in June, 1941, the policy of the Communist Party[6] did change to co-operation with Great Britain and the United States as well as with the progressive and democratic elements in the various Nations, and therefore also with us.[7]

And so this conversation with J. Šverma provided me with additional confirmation of the correctness of my calculations concerning the development of events in the East. And it forced me to continue to the full my cautious attitude based as it was not only on the unitary synthesis I had conceived about the world war and the future revolution which would probably result—in the form, too, which I anticipated—but also on my view that the *early* entry of the Soviet Union into the war, possibly even against its own will, was inevitable.

3. *Progress of the Soviet Union towards Participation in the War*

As soon as the Soviet Union began to stress its neutrality I concentrated almost exclusively on France, Great Britain and America, being convinced that this policy of neutrality would temporarily prevent any development whatsoever of our work in relation to the Soviet Union. The new Soviet propaganda about the 'Imperialist' war of the capitalist powers helped to confirm my deductions. The progress of the war at the beginning of 1940,

*As in the case of Japan (Tr.).

the German invasion of Norway, Belgium, and the Netherlands and above all the fall of France (the suddenness and speed of which greatly surprised, as it seemed to me, even the Soviet Union) all these events considerably strengthened my thesis.

The effect of these developments was to drive the Soviet Union still further into *neutrality*. In the second half of December, 1939, the Soviet Government had already announced to our envoy, Zd. Fierlinger, that his mission in Moscow must be ended. The envoy then left for Paris and, later, for London. We had expected this decision because as early as September 16th, 1939, the Soviet Union *had recognised the Tiso Government de facto and de jure* and had entered into diplomatic relations with it. Tuka sent a mission to Moscow and addressed compliments there from time to time. The Soviet Government, which wanted to be informed about what was happening in and around Slovakia, also sent its mission to Bratislava. After envoy Fierlinger's return to Paris I asked him for a detailed report about our position in the Soviet Union and about the way the situation had developed after Munich. Besides sending this report to me Fierlinger also gave a copy on April 20th, 1940, to the Paris National Committee. I drew the same conclusions from this report as from my other reports about Soviet policy. I was not wrong.

In addition, I gave much attention to the way in which the Soviet Government emphasized the '*insignificance of these various formalities*,'—the description envoy Fierlinger told me had been applied to the recognition of Slovakia, the abolition of our Legation, etc. when he left Moscow. It was clear that the Soviet Union was bribing Germany to prolong the period of neutrality. Consequently, in spite of all these events, which for our people at that time were very depressing events, I again said in my broadcast address to the homeland when France fell that I was convinced that the fall of France did not mean the end of the war and that I was still counting on the intervention in the war of the 'great eastern factor'—the Soviet Union.[8] I always retained this conviction.

The breaking out of the Soviet-Finnish war on November 30th, 1939, seemed to me a very significant event which fitted exactly into my interpretation of the future course of world events. I interpreted it as showing that the Soviet Union, regardless of the German-Finnish alliance and Germany's general policy, was consistently and undeviatingly pursuing its aim of wishing to protect itself against Germany both territorially and strategically. At the same time, it was ready to bear all the consequences of its actions: expulsion from the League of Nations and the attempts of Daladier to draw France and Great Britain into some form or other into

action against the Soviet Union. The object of this manoeuvre was in line with Daladier's earlier plan. France was to disengage itself from the war against Germany and Germany's activities were to be diverted towards an attack against the Soviet Union, at the same time agreeing to make peace with the Western Powers.

These considerations confirmed my conviction that the Soviet Union was ceaselessly preparing for war and trying to guard itself against all possible eventualities to which war might give rise. I also held the view that this was nevertheless a very risky policy for the U.S.S.R. I therefore warned all my collaborators to remain always very reserved in their political attitude towards the Soviet Union. I told them to wait patiently without compromising themselves either with one side or the other and not to be influenced in any way by the very active anti-Soviet propaganda which was being carried on at that time in the West and in America in regard to the Soviet war against Finland.

Finally, at the end of 1940 I decided to test in the U.S.S.R. itself my conjectures as to the future development of Soviet policy. Our envoy having left Moscow, I wanted to investigate the possibility of sending a special unofficial representative to the Soviet Union for the purpose of maintaining permanent contact and informing us of the development of the situation *vis-à-vis* the progress of the war and at the same time informing the authorities in the Soviet Union of our own situation. I chose for this task Col. Heliodor Pika* of the General Staff and Ing. Klučka, who at that time were both working for us in Rumania. Col. Pika left in October, 1940, going first to Constantinople where he was in permanent contact with the Soviet intelligence service. There our delegates were several times visited by a high officer from Moscow and ultimately our delegation was admitted into the Soviet Union without difficulty, thus becoming our first link between London and Moscow after the interruption of our diplomatic relations.[9]

As I wanted to find out what the Soviet Government thought of our current military activities I asked for information about the way they were treating our soldiers belonging to the unit of Lt.-Col. L. Svoboda† who had crossed into the Soviet Union after the fall of Poland. I ascertained that

*Col. Pika was hanged in 1950 by the Communist Government of Czechoslovakia after having been found guilty of spying for the Western Powers while he was in Moscow (Tr.)

†Lieut.-Col., later General, Svoboda became 'non-Party' Minister of Defence after the war. In 1950, he was replaced in that capacity by Dr. Alexei Čepička, the late President Gottwald's son-in-law, in order to facilitate the reconstruction of the Czechoslovak Army on the Soviet model. General Svoboda then became chairman of the Youth Movement and made a Vice-Premier but has taken little part in politics (Tr.).

these soldiers were placed in a temporary camp in the Ukraine, that they were reasonably treated, that there was no interference with their internal affairs and especially that they were subjected to no propaganda which would in the slightest degree have had an unfavourable effect on our activity in the West and on our national aims in general. I asked the Soviet authorities through Ambassador Maisky and Colonel Pika whether they could not send some of these soldiers to the West (to join our army in Great Britain). Even in this direction there came a positive answer and, actually, within a few weeks the Soviet Union helped to transport two detachments of our soldiers from Russia to the Near East where the British took them over and afterwards sent them to our military units in Great Britain.

These two developments left me in no doubt as to the situation. But it was necessary to proceed, on our side, with the utmost discretion and not by our negligence to cause the Soviet Union any difficulties in respect of its neutral position towards Germany. We succeeded. *And so from the beginning of 1941, my political calculations became an absolute conviction—after I had checked them with the probable Soviet plans.* I was sure that the participation of the Soviet Union in the war against Germany was in reality only a *question of time*. It was simply a question whether it would take place according to Communist suppositions, that is to say, not before the end of the war and in the form of a revolution and with the help also of German Communists (which I never ceased to doubt) or whether it would happen in accordance with my own expectations and opinion, in the near future and not simply on the revolutionary plane. The reports I received from Germany, soon brought me to the conclusion that in the end the deciding factor would be the Germans themselves, that is to say, Hitler, and not Stalin.

Our future actions were based consistently on this standpoint—especially in regard to our policy towards Poland. Towards the end of January, 1941, I asked the Premier of the Polish émigré Government, General Wladislaw Sikorski, to inspect our military units in Britain. He arrived on the eve of the military festivities of our Army on January 26th and spent the night with us at Aston Abbotts.

At that time we were already negotiating a Czechoslovak-Polish agreement for the final settlement of our mutual relations. It was therefore a very suitable occasion for a thorough discussion of the whole problem of the war which took the form of a conversation lasting till the early hours of the following day. For me the first question was to agree on a common policy towards the Soviet Union. I told General Sikorski frankly and clearly how I saw the situation: that we must reckon with the early participation of

the Soviet Union in the war against Germany, make our plans on this basis, come to terms with the Soviet Union about the military direction of the war and regulate our conception of the whole World War II in mutual agreement.

Sikorski's reaction to my exposition rather surprised me and showed me once more how difficult it would be to reach an agreement between us and the Poles—even in the case of General Sikorski. He rose and began to pace nervously about the room. Then he came to a halt in front of me in an almost military attitude and declared with extreme gravity: '*What you are saying would be a catastrophe for us all.*'

Nevertheless we discussed in detail every aspect of the Soviet Union's entry into the war. There was a clear line of cleavage between our standpoints. Sikorski counted on a kind of repetition of the first World War: Great Britain would hold out in the fight against Germany; it would get the help of the United States which would later enter the war and would help France to its feet again. Essentially in the second World War also the issues of war and peace would be decided by the United States and Great Britain. Poland therefore must be orientated only to them.

Later when the Soviet Union was attacked by Germany and was fully engaged in the war, Sikorski (and with him all Poles) added to this theory the opinion that Germany in its victorious march would first smash the Soviet Union and that afterwards the United States and Great Britain would smash Germany and would then together with Poland construct a victorious peace. At the time of our talk (that is to say, on January 26th, 1941) Sikorski considered himself to be in a state of war not only with Germany but also with the Soviet Union and he was not willing even to consider any suggestion that he should make preparations for an agreement with the Soviet Union while there was still time.

I pointed out to him that Great Britain alone—remembering that the United States was not yet actually at war with Germany—and perhaps even Great Britain and the United States together at some later date would not be able to control the course of the war throughout the world without the Soviet Union. I stressed the geographical situation of our two countries and my conviction that especially we Poles and Czechoslovaks, being on the far side of Europe, could not win the European war without the Soviet Union. I did not convince him.

We returned to this discussion several times in personal conversations later on. Sometimes Jan Masaryk, Dr. H. Ripka and the then Polish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ed. Raczynski also took part and we had quite heated arguments. But Sikorski never changed his point of view

essentially, not even when, a year later, after the German attack on the Soviet Union, he went to Moscow and began serious negotiations with Stalin for a Soviet-Polish treaty. His chief aim then was to get tens of thousands of Poles out of the Soviet Union and to add them to his Army in the West. The other 'London' Poles were even more uncompromising in their concept of World War II. As is well known, the matter ended with the break-up of the Polish front in London during 1943 and 1944.

This conversation with Sikorski—and a number of other conversations during the Polish-Czechoslovak negotiations[10]—led me to realize the fundamental difference between us. I therefore remained very cautious during all our negotiations with the London Poles and did not depart from the line which I was convinced was the only right one for us and would prove to be so. I held to my view and during the course of our negotiations with the Poles, I tried with the utmost sincerity first with Sikorski and then with Mikolajczyk, to influence them in their own interest as well as ours, to try in time to come to a real agreement with the Soviet Union.

Not long afterwards reports which reached me from Prague fully confirmed my expectations. The Soviet Union was still trying to postpone its participation in the war as long as possible. But when Hitler in the Battle of Britain in the autumn of 1940 failed to break British resistance and force it to sue for peace, he was obliged to resolve a dilemma which for Germany was really desperate: what was he to do if Britain should continue its resistance, strengthened more and more by the help of the United States and if the preparations of the Soviet Union either to enter the war or to evoke a great social revolution should increase to a maximum intensity?

For Germany these were catastrophic prospects and Hitler, actuated by his character and his lack of education, immediately made his fatal and amateurish decision, expecting in his political narrow-mindedness that he would get out of this situation somehow in the end. The United States not being in the war, he decided that the time was opportune for an attack on the Soviet Union to break its strength before this could be sufficiently developed, thus nipping in the bud its war preparations and its plan to enter the war and stage a revolution later on. At the same time he hoped that it would be possible to convince the Western Powers that the Soviet Union was planning a European and world revolution and to induce them to make peace with Germany and give him a free hand in the East. Pétain's France was without doubt ready to do so.*

At the beginning of March, 1941, Col. Moravec brought me reports

*Hess's arrival in Scotland on May 10th, 1941, has an obvious bearing on this theory (Tr.).

that Germany was seriously preparing for its attack on the Soviet Union. At the same time we got full details of the German preparations to solve the Yugoslav question and of an agreement between Mussolini and Hitler for the partition of Yugoslavia between Germany and Italy. I at once passed all these reports on to the Yugoslav envoy in London, Subotič, and warned Belgrade of what Rome and Berlin were preparing. This, of course, had, and at that time could have, no influence on the policy of Prince Paul. Long before Munich, he was already on the other side of the barricade, and therefore also opposed to us. Moreover, the Cvetković Government had already for a long while been negotiating with Hitler for Yugoslavia's accession to the Axis pact and its adhesion was publicly announced on March 25th, 1941. By that time Yugoslavia was already completely in Hitler's clutches and could not extricate itself—in spite of the attempts made later by revolutionary Yugoslavia to come to an agreement on Soviet help. Immediately afterwards, on March 27th, 1941, the revolution against Prince Paul broke out and Peter II was proclaimed king. The German invasion of Yugoslavia began soon afterwards on April 6th, 1941. In a short while, Peter II with all his entourage and the Government arrived in London.

But our reports of German preparations against the Soviet Union became increasingly numerous[11] until at the beginning of March we got such precise statements in London as: '*The campaign against the Soviet Union is said to have been definitely decided upon;* as soon as Germany has finished the Yugoslav campaign, i.e. in the first half of May at the latest, the German attack on the Soviet Union will begin; it is reported in Berlin that all the necessary military arrangements have been made and there has already been a conference of all the higher commanders of the German Eastern front at which the opening moves of the campaign were precisely determined and explained; the date of the "Kriegsbereitschaft" (alert) for the whole Eastern front is said to have been fixed for May 15th; some technical details of the military plan of the whole Eastern campaign were appended to this report'.

This was one of those solemn moments of the war which moved me the most. It was so fateful that at first I did not even dare to pass the news on immediately in *all* details to the Allies though in due course I told the essence of the matter to all, to the British, the Americans and the Soviet Union. To Winston Churchill I announced it under somewhat dramatic circumstances.

I had invited Churchill to visit our brigade in Leamington on April 19th. At noon of the same day, before reviewing our troops, we were invited

for lunch by Mr. Ronald Tree, M.P. Besides Churchill and some other British guests and Czechoslovak soldiers, the American Ambassador Harriman and the commander of the American Air Force, General Arnold, were also present. After lunch we began to discuss the future course of the war and I had an opportunity to develop in detail to these political and military authorities the whole question of the German attack on the Soviet Union and to express my firm conviction that the participation of the Soviet Union in the war had been already decided in principle. '*Exactly when and how this will happen will not be decided by Stalin but by Hitler*'—this was how I described the situation on that occasion.

Winston Churchill, as he told me later, had just received similar reports from the United States of Hitler's preparations for his attack on the Soviet Union. My reports had sharpened, confirmed and rounded off his information. At that moment Great Britain was *alone* in the war against Germany. It suffered much and put forth its whole strength to hold out against the German assault. It can be imagined how Churchill received my reports and opinion ! During the discussion he returned three times to the question: 'And you believe that the Soviet Union will really fight, that it will hold out, that its officers' corps is of a sufficiently high calibre ?' I assured Churchill that I had full confidence in the Soviet Union and its power to hold out against a German assault.

After lunch we drove to our Army in Churchill's car and discussed in detail the state of the Red Army: its preparedness, its morale, the condition of the officers' corps. This last question especially—the memories of Tukhatchevsky and the officers' purges of 1936 and 1937 were still alive—constantly occupied Churchill's mind. And he added other questions concerning the moral and political state of the Soviet population, the country's economic preparedness, communications, etc. I tried honestly and truthfully to dispel his doubts and to strengthen and confirm his hopes.

I appreciated all his questions when I learned soon afterwards what reports Churchill was getting about the Soviet Union, partly from the British Intelligence Service, partly—indeed especially—from *Polish* sources in London. In general it can be said that they were unanimous: 'If a German-Soviet war should come the Soviet Union will be liquidated within eight to ten weeks'. This was how the British Intelligence Service formulated its opinion, and the Polish Intelligence Service said the same. After the attack on the Soviet Union had begun, Goebbels' propaganda service directly and indirectly, openly and secretly put identical reports in circulation.

On all these matters, and on my belief in the necessity for future co-

operation between the West and the Soviet Union in the prosecution of the war, I systematically informed Bruce Lockhart who had worked with us and helped us in the first World War during our* sojourn in Russia. Bruce Lockhart agreed with Masaryk's policy of non-intervention in the affairs of the Soviet Union at that time and was its exponent among the British. After the war—before taking up journalism—he was for some years attached to the British Legation in Prague. There he was our devoted friend. And, in the second World War when he again entered the Foreign Office, he was first of all put in charge of our affairs about which he was well informed. He was also in close touch with the affairs of nearly all Slav nations. Thus he was able to render us many valuable services. He deserved well in fact in respect of British-Czechoslovak relations. I was in contact with him several times a week; and especially in those troubled moments of the attack of Hitler's Germany on the Soviet Union, he appreciated the course of events correctly and endeavoured to influence British policy accordingly.

Through him I gave the Foreign Office my opinions and frequent items of information about the situation in Germany and Central Europe and on the possible trend of Soviet policy. When the German attack against the Soviet Union approached, I was particularly anxious that the British reaction to this great event should be the right one, in line with conditions on the Continent and *especially with the Allied and our own aims and interests and also with the interests of the Soviet Union itself.* I cannot say to what extent these opinions really swayed British circles when the given moment arrived. In any case they had a quite considerable influence.

It is a fact that in those fateful days (June 21st and 22nd, 1941) we, through the headquarters of our Government in London, were in uninterrupted contact with Bruce Lockhart—and through him as intermediary with the Foreign Office and with Prime Minister Winston Churchill until the moment when Churchill on the evening of June 22nd, 1941, delivered his great broadcast speech in which he announced to the world that from this moment Great Britain and the Soviet Union were Allies for the overthrow of Germany, Hitler and Nazism and everything connected with them.

4. *Germany's Attack on the Soviet Union and the Renewal of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Alliance*

It is clear, therefore, that after Munich I did not allow myself to be misled by the *seeming rapprochement* of Germany and the Soviet Union. I

*i.e. that of the Czech legionaries (Tr.).

knew both States and their political and ideological orientation quite well. From the beginning I excluded the possibility that any agreement between them could be sincere or permanent. It could only be a temporary development and necessity, dictated by opportunist and tactical considerations in the case of both the partners. Conversely, it was clear to me that there was and must be an unbridgeable ideological abyss between these two implacable doctrines—that in the end they must clash with all the revolutionary consequences which must inexorably follow. *I was especially sure of this in the case of Germany.*

So I did not change my opinion, *not even when it seemed*—and was the generally accepted view—that, before Germany started the war in 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union had reached an implicit or explicit agreement on Poland, the Baltic States, Bessarabia and finally even on Finland to the benefit of the Soviet Union. I was therefore quite firm in my expectation that the conflict of the two ideologies would lead to a German-Soviet conflict. I awaited this with absolute certainty and did not hide the fact either from my British friends, or from British, American, Soviet or other officials.[12]

This point of view determined my attitude towards the Soviet Union immediately after Munich. The basic policy of the Soviet Union towards Czechoslovakia, before Munich and shortly after it, was shown by its behaviour at the time of the crisis of September, 1938, both by the Note which Foreign Commissar M. Litvinov addressed to Germany on March 18th, 1939, after the occupation of Prague and finally by Soviet Ambassador Maisky's intervention on behalf of Czechoslovakia at Geneva as late as May 23rd, 1939. Even when the Soviet Government after signing the German-Soviet Pact in August, 1939, first took a *somewhat passive attitude* towards us and finally from January 1st, 1940, definitely ceased to recognise the Czechoslovak Legation in Moscow, maintaining a strictly neutral attitude towards us, I adopted a passive and waiting attitude towards this new Soviet policy. This did not in the least mean that I regarded the Soviet Government's behaviour as entirely right or that I fully agreed with it. But as always, so also on this occasion, I did fully respect the actions of an independent State, which is and always must remain the sovereign judge of its tactical moves in foreign policy and especially in matters involving war. I therefore waited until events should ripen and bring about a change of Soviet policy.

From March to April, 1941—as I have already mentioned—we were regularly getting from both Berlin and Prague not only systematic reports about the German preparations for war against the Soviet Union but also

information indicating how the German General Staff itself was imprudently and quite incredibly underestimating the value of the Soviet Army. It reckoned that the whole 'Blitz-Campaign' against the Soviet Union would last about sixty days at most, prepared its quislings for Kiev, Minsk and for Moscow and expected, that some time in September—after the liquidation of the Soviet Union—it would be able to devote its whole attention once again to Western Europe either with a peace offer or with a threat to invade Great Britain.

Our own reports on the Soviet Army were quite different. In 1938 already—but especially after the fall of France—I learned that the condition of the Soviet Air Force and armaments industry was satisfactory though not fully built up, that the equipment was sound and the preparations for defence solid and that the morale of the common Soviet soldier remained excellent. Of course, I took it for granted that at the beginning of hostilities there would be important German successes, but I was equally sure that after them the war would be substantially protracted and that great German disappointments were in store. In general I considered that in the existing conditions, a German attack against the Soviet Union was simply a German suicide. In my broadcast of June 24th, 1941, I clearly explained my attitude and my views for those at home in Prague.

On Sunday 22nd, when the crossing of the Soviet frontier by German armies was reported, we in London were all in a state of extreme tension and expectation as to how Great Britain and the United States would react. Churchill's speech broadcast on the evening of the same day dispelled all our apprehensions and uncertainty though even after he had delivered it, I had to convince other British political and military circles time and again of the necessity of marching together with the Soviet Union in the interest of us all unconditionally and to the end. It is clear, in fact, that Churchill's address remains one of the most important documents of the second World War.

Churchill said *inter alia :*

'At 4 o'clock this morning Hitler attacked and invaded Russia. All his usual formalities of perfidy were observed with scrupulous technique. A non-aggression treaty had been solemnly signed, and was in force between the two countries. Then, suddenly, without a declaration of war, without even an ultimatum, the German bombs rained down from the sky on the Russian cities. The German troops violated the Soviet frontiers, and an hour later the German Ambassador, who until the night before was lavishing his assurances of friendship, almost of alliance, on the Russians, called upon the Russian Foreign Minister to

tell him that a state of war existed between Germany and Russia.

'Thus was repeated on a far larger scale the same kind of outrage against every form of signed compact and international faith which we had witnessed in Norway, Denmark, Holland and Belgium . . . and which Hitler's accomplice and jackal Mussolini so faithfully imitated in the case of Greece.

'Hitler is a monster of wickedness, insatiable in his lust for blood and plunder. Not content with having all Europe under his heel, or else terrorised into various forms of abject submission, he must now carry his work of butchery and desolation among the vast multitudes of Russia and Asia.

'I have to make a declaration. Can you doubt what our policy will be? We have but one aim and one single irrevocable purpose. We are resolved to destroy Hitler and every vestige of the Nazi regime. From this nothing will turn us—nothing. We will never parley, we will never negotiate with Hitler or any of his gang.

'Any man or State who fights against Nazism will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe. That is our policy, and that is our declaration. It follows, therefore, that we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and to the Russian people. We shall appeal to all our friends and Allies in every part of the world to take the same course and pursue it as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end.

'We have offered to the Government of Soviet Russia any technical and economic assistance which is in our power and which is likely to be of service to them. Hitler wishes to destroy the Russian power because he hopes that if he succeeds in this he will be able to bring back the main strength of his Army and Air Force from the East and hurl it upon this island, which he knows he must conquer or suffer the penalty of his crimes.

'His invasion of Russia is no more than a prelude to an attempted invasion of the British Isles. He hopes no doubt that all this may be accomplished before the winter comes, and that he can overwhelm Great Britain before the fleets and air power of the United States will intervene. The Russian danger is therefore our danger and the danger of the United States, just as the cause of any Russian fighting for his hearth and home is the cause of free men and free peoples in every quarter of the globe.

'Let us learn the lessons already taught by such cruel experience. Let us redouble our exertions and strike with united strength while life and power remain.'

We accepted Churchill's appeal immediately for Czechoslovakia.[13] On the following day President Roosevelt, Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles for the United States expressed their agreement with Churchill's policy of full aid to the Soviet Union in its resistance to Nazi Germany. On July 13th, 1941, the British-Soviet treaty was signed in which both States pledged general and mutual help against Hitler's Germany and agreed not to sign either a separate armistice or a separate peace with Germany. Soon afterwards the other Allies, one after the other, made their similar declarations. Poland, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Greece all fully accepted the basic principles of British-Soviet political and military co-operation against the Axis Powers.

As already mentioned, I broadcast from London on June 24th to the Nation at home. In it I explained how and why the German attack against the Soviet Union came about, how this was a suicidal act on the part of Germany, how in spite of initial successes Hitler would suffer dreadful catastrophes in the Soviet Union, how we had expected this development and that therefore our policy during Munich and afterwards had been right. Our former relations with the Soviet Union of 1938 were fully restored by these events. Our victory and the reversal of Munich must now be regarded as assured and the whole Nation persevere with re-doubled vigour in its fight against Germany.[14]

I at once renewed contact with the Soviet Ambassador, Ivan Maisky, who informed me on July 5th, 1941, that he had an official communication from Moscow for me. On the same day similar communications were sent by Maisky to the Polish and Yugoslav Governments. I visited him on July 8th. In discussing our mutual relations Maisky explained the point of view of the Soviet Government as follows: The Soviet Union stands for the independence of Czechoslovakia and does not intend to interfere in any way with the internal affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic which solely concern the Czechoslovak people. The Soviet Government is ready to renew immediately diplomatic relations with the Czechoslovak Government in London. To my inquiry whether the Soviet Government would accept our former envoy, he replied that if it was the wish of the Czechoslovak Government, the Soviet Union would agree to the return of Minister Fierlinger to Moscow. At the same time the Soviet Ambassador informed me that his Government would permit the establishment of Czechoslovak military units on the Soviet front if this was the wish of the Czechoslovak Government.

I asked the Ambassador that the verbal accord we had reached in this conversation should be put in writing. He replied that he would have to

ask Moscow first. On the basis of instructions from Moscow he then sent me a letter on July 16th, 1941,[15] with which he enclosed the draft Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement. It read as follows:

'The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic have agreed to sign the following treaty:

'1. The two Governments have agreed immediately to exchange Ministers.

'2. The two Governments mutually undertake to aid and support each other in every way in the present war against Hitlerite Germany.

'3. The Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics consents to the formation on the territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of national Czechoslovak military units under a commander appointed by the Czechoslovak Government in agreement with the Soviet Government. The Czechoslovak military units on the territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will operate under the direction of the High Military Command of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

'4. The present agreement comes into force immediately after its signature and is not subject to ratification.

'5. The present agreement is drawn up in two copies, each of them in the Russian and Czechoslovak languages. Both texts have equal force.'

On the following day, the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the British and also the Polish and Yugoslav Governments, with both of which Ambassador Maisky had already discussed similar proposals. We at once began concrete negotiations and on July 18th, 1941—the day on which the *final* regulation of our relations with the British Government was also reached—we concluded our new treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union. It was signed at the Soviet Embassy in London by Ivan Maisky in the name of the Soviet Union and by Jan Masaryk in the name of the Czechoslovak Republic.

As I had informed my country in my broadcast from London on June 24th, the relations between our two States thus returned to the pre-Munich situation and the old friendship. The Soviet Union which had so resolutely and from the beginning opposed Munich and which had rejected March 15th, 1939, with the same resolution, *dealt in this decisive moment the death blow to Munich and all its consequences*, because it *immediately recognised the Republic again in its pre-Munich status*, fully and definitely and without any restrictions or conditions.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

[1]See pp. 38 sqq.

[2]I must mention at this point that our intelligence service which at that time was in the charge of Colonel Frant. Moravec on behalf of General Ingr, was quite first-class during the first period of the war. From the time of the First Republic it had, both in the Republic and in Germany, a magnificent net of intelligence agents among the German soldiers themselves, and especially among anti-Nazi Germans. In this way, until 1942 (up to the time of the purge after the shooting of R. Heydrich) we received from Germany—often direct from the German General Staff—reports which were a source of great astonishment to the British and which were of immense usefulness in the guidance of our liberation movement abroad. I feel it my duty to stress this fact. And I am anxious that it should be assessed by all of us at its true value. The military information so gained was at that time transmitted from the Republic to London by the radio transmitters of the 'UVOD' (Center of Military Resistance) together with politically important information of its own. Later, transmitters were worked by parachutists from Britain. I shall deal with this great achievement of our resistance movement at home in detail in the next volume of these 'Memoirs'. Without this permanent contact with our country, uninterrupted even during the greatest German terror and maintained at the price of the greatest sacrifice, our Movement abroad would not have gained many of the successes which were granted to it.

[3]Before I visited Maisky I had already sent the following report to my friends in our underground movement in Prague on August 21st (see *Six Years in Exile and the Second World War*, p. 61):

'London, August 21st, 1939

'1. According to our information, war must be expected in the period between August 20th and 30th, with August 26th–27th the crucial days. Of course, in view of the efforts being made in London and in Paris to avoid a general war at nearly any price, one must be prepared for desperate efforts to preserve peace up to the last moment. But matters have already gone so far that war can now be avoided only by a *near miracle*. Therefore be prepared for everything.

'2. We have information that the Protectorate will be abolished. Even in that case it would now be superfluous to stage a revolt or demonstrations which would involve massacres and premature terrorism. It would be better to take our stand on the political fact that when war starts what happens in the Czech countries and in Slovakia is not our responsibility.

'3. At the outset of hostilities, *we expect considerable German successes*. A considerable part of Poland will probably be occupied and the Poles will be pushed back into a position difficult to defend. The operations on the Western front will, it seems, not move very fast so that a quick and effective counter-offensive cannot be expected. Hitler, by the way, is calculating on these lines.

'4. You must not let yourselves be depressed by these events nor lose your optimism and courage. The Western Powers will no longer be able to give way and make peace with Germany after the war has lasted a few weeks, being satisfied with some impossible compromise. In this respect, both the British and French public will be obdurate. So far as the Soviet Union is concerned, we cannot yet say what its final attitude will be, *but in the end it will assuredly fight against Germany and will uphold and support us politically*.

'5. Your general line from the outset, therefore, until we can give you more information, must be restrained and non-committal . . . Continue to make all preparations for passive resistance . . . and do not neglect other possibilities, so that everything may be ready in time for all emergencies.

'6. Here in London we shall at once begin our full political, diplomatic and military activity. We shall wholeheartedly join the front against Germany and against the dictatorships. Until now, while London and Paris have always kept the way open for possible negotiations with Berlin and Rome, we have not been free and have had to restrain ourselves. Now everything will be easier. Nevertheless, *do not expect miracles, especially not immediate ones. Do not expect we shall win any great successes—do not even expect far-reaching promises.* Perhaps events will soon force France and Great Britain to declare themselves on our side. But possibly even now—especially so long as those guilty of Munich are in power—they will for some time avoid open and far-reaching obligations.

'7. Our military activities will presumably proceed sufficiently fast. In France negotiations are in an advanced stage; in Poland matters are getting complicated* . . . From our standpoint it is a question of order and unity. Being in a common war front with Poland, we want to agree and co-operate loyally with her.

'8. Either as an outcome of the fighting or as the result of negotiations in the case of disorganisation in Germany, *the restoration of Czechoslovakia is today already a certainty.* For the time being, of course, not even we ourselves can say under what exact conditions and within what boundaries. The fight on these issues is about to begin and it will depend exclusively on the way the war develops, on the situation under which peace is achieved, what will happen also on our territory, who will be in the war and who will keep out of it. It is self-evident that we will have to start cautiously. Our demands will for the time being be put forward with reserve and then we will gradually try as resolutely as possible for the *attainable maximum.*

'9. Come what may, therefore, do not let yourselves be confused—especially not by some of our tactical moves and declarations nor by the propaganda of our opponents—in the course of the struggle. Also do not let yourselves be misled by any declaration made by one or other of the Powers at the beginning of the war. Things are not clear to them. We have not yet been able to discuss anything with them concretely, because up to now they have all regarded us as war-mongers and some of those holding responsible positions have sought for an agreement with Germany even at the price of sacrificing us, Poland and others. Now things will be different. So do not let any event whatsoever discourage you. Do not believe anything to be final. Do not assume that any declaration, any initial failure, any unfavourable action against us or any similar thing will decide our ultimate fate and prevent the course of events from turning to our advantage. We are convinced *that the development of the war will carry matters far, very far* and that the whole of Europe will emerge much changed. For us this can mean only *a change for the better and the final triumph of our national cause.*

'Yours
Dr. E. B.'

[4]Dr. Vladimir Krajina especially distinguished himself by his tenacity and courage, giving us the most reliable information about the conditions in the so-called Protectorate in general and about the Protectorate Government.

*General Prchala and the émigré group in the West were at cross purposes (Tr.).

[5]See the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia of December 15th, 1940, sent to me in London from Prague by my friends and fellow-workers (Dr. Vladimir Krajina and his collaborators). From this I will give the following extracts:

'The second imperialist war has already lasted for fourteen months and there is still no end to be seen of it. Though a number of States, among them even mighty France, have lost their independence, the result of the war remains uncertain. While Germany, together with Italy, is trying to become masters of the European Nations which were formerly under the influence of Anglo-French imperialism, Great Britain, supported by the United States of America, still remains ruler of the seas and of immense colonies. *The United States of America*, which represent the most powerful imperialist colossus with the greatest economic and financial resources and the most developed industrial technique, are today the most dangerous factor in the development of the war. Speculating on becoming the heir of the British Empire, threatened with ruin and fearing the increase of German imperialist power, the United States are inciting Britain to continue the war, are using the war to win supremacy over South America, are inciting yet more European Nations to enter the war together with their competitor Japan and they are evoking an atmosphere of inevitable war in the Pacific. They try to misuse the just national liberation war of the Chinese Nation and make it an instrument of their own imperialist expansion in the Far East. The United States of America are trying to cause enmity between Germany and the Soviet Union in order to turn the expansion of German imperialism towards the East while themselves remaining out of the war and thus to win advantages over their competitors Great Britain, Germany and Japan, decide the war in their own favour and save the capitalist world order . . .

'The *Soviet Union* which has considerably grown politically, militarily and territorially during this imperialist war, represents today a force which in conjunction with the revolutionary movement of the international working-class and the oppressed nations will decide the result of the war. The Soviet Union which maintains neutrality and is carrying out an active policy of peace is attentively watching the forces of both imperialist camps and their war plans in all parts of the world, is influencing nations not to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for either imperialist bloc, is making impossible the preponderance of either bloc and is thereby preventing the danger of an imperialist victory of one or the other party to the conflict. Soviet-German friendship represents the corner-stone of the international situation against which the imperialist and anti-Soviet plans of the Anglo-French bloc have already been dashed to pieces and against which the ciminal intentions of the United States of America are now dashing themselves to pieces. **The historical importance of the journey of Comrade Molotov to Berlin is based on the fact that, on the basis of the continuation of friendly relations between Germany and the Soviet Union, this journey frustrated the plans of the United States to spread the war and turn it towards the East. The U.S.S.R. will continue to use the differences between the imperialists to strengthen its own position and will watch for the arrival of the right moment for the final disruption of capitalism. On the basis of its peace policy, the U.S.S.R. continually earns greater sympathy among all nations especially among the working people of the great German Nation.***

*It is not clear whether the special emphasis on various passages of the resolution are those of President Beneš or the resolution itself (Tr.).

'The whole capitalist world is breaking into two immense war camps the battle between which threatens all mankind with an immense catastrophe. Both camps, while locked in a cruel struggle for the repartition of the world, have until now always kept back from decisive strokes for fear of a proletarian revolution involving the fate of the whole capitalist system and in the hope that some solution will be found at the expense of the U.S.S.R. But this hope is dwindling in consequence of the depth of inter-imperialist differences and in consequence of the steadily growing and already crushing strength of the U.S.S.R. and its wise policy of neutrality. *The imperialist chain is being stretched to breaking point and the near future will show which link as the weakest will be the first to give way. The revolution of the working-class and of the oppressed nations following in the footsteps of the great Socialist October Revolution represents the only real way out of the abyss of the present war . . .*

'All attempts of the occupants to break the resistance of the *Czech Nation* by furious terror, demagogy and with the help of a handful of traitors, have failed. Tension still exists between the ruling regime and the people. Goebbels' speeches addressed to the Czech Nation are partly a confession of failure and partly an attempt to win the Czech Nation to obedience by new means. These new means consist in promising the Czech Nation future advantages if it abandons its fight for liberty, if it accepts its fate and takes part at the side of Germany in building its own prison in Hitler's "New Europe". The German regime counts on the anti-proletarian class interests of that part of the local bourgeoisie which, after the fall of France, sees German capitalism as the saviour of the capitalist system. The Czech bourgeoisie in the true spirit of its history has now arrived at the rôle of *grave-digger* of its own Nation . . .'

'The changes which took place in the international situation after the break-up of the Anglo-French bloc have also caused a number of changes in the Czech political arena. **After the defeat of France, Beneš, together with the Czech bourgeois-socialist émigrés, has placed himself still more in the service of British imperialism and is bolstering the disappointed ranks of his followers by inculcating faith in the United States of America. The resurrection of the old coalition in the form of a Czech émigré 'Government' is a complete disclosure of his plans to re-establish the capitalistic rule of the Czech bourgeoisie and at the same time a new manifestation of the total political decrepitude of the political representatives of the Czech bourgeoisie. The co-operation of Beneš with the bankrupt Polish aristocrats for the foundation of a Czechoslovak-Polish anti-German and anti-Soviet State tributary to Britain, the chasing of Czech citizens into the British imperialist army, the description of the first imperialist war as a liberation war of Nations and of the present war as its ideological continuation and culmination, the participation in Anglo-American intrigues against the U.S.S.R.—all these things make Beneš and the émigrés he leads an agency of Anglo-American capitalism in the Czech ranks, extremely hostile to the interests of the Czech national liberation fight and most dangerous. This group is a permanent threat that the Czech Nation will be fatally misused and led into a tragic collision with the German revolutionary workers and with our chief hope and support, the Socialist Fatherland of all workers, the Soviet Union. The illusions of the broad masses in the United States and their lack of comprehension of the imperialist character of the policy of Britain and America are exploited by Beneš's followers for a new activity : in the spirit of directives from abroad they agitate for the victory of the Anglo-American bloc as a supposed condition for our liberation, they continually propagate absurd chauvinist incitements, they are sowing hatred among the Czech population against German workers clad in military uniforms, and they are awakening distrust against the policy of the U.S.S.R.**

Their activity is quite incompatible with the interests of the Czech national liberation fight and the service they are rendering to national capitalism in the mendacious guise of national heroes must be unmasked without pity . . .

'The KSČ (Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) which has overcome initial vacillations in evaluating the policy of the Anglo-French bloc and of Beneš is fulfilling its mission as leader of the Czech working-class and the Czech Nation honourably and successfully under the severest persecution. Only the KSČ explains to the working people the real meaning of the present war and the way out. Thanks to the KSČ all attempts of the Czech agents of Berlin have completely failed and the influence of Beneš has decreased considerably. Thanks to the KSČ, the majority of the Czech working people stand loyally at the side of the Soviet Union and reject the slanders disseminated by the Beneš group and the Social Democrats. Thanks to the KSČ, the capacity of the Czech working people to resist the anti-German chauvinist agitation of the Beneš following is growing and the working people resolutely resist the anti-semitic incitements of the Hácha group. Under the leadership of the KSČ, the working people are taking the first steps towards the opening of the fight for a part of their demands. The Party successfully leads in a number of campaigns especially in the anti-war campaign on the first anniversary of the outbreak of war and the campaign on the occasion of October 28th and November 7th. The party has won into its ranks many members of the socialist parties. *Only the KSČ in spite of insane terrorism and great persecutions has maintained its organisation and leadership underground and is continuing its active work.*'

[6]Later, in quieter and more stable times, it will be necessary to consider all the resolutions and the various publications of the Soviet Communist Party and the Communist Parties of the other Nations in detail, analyse them scientifically and objectively, compare them carefully with the progress of the war and show to what extent their doctrine was sound and what fundamental mistakes of policy or doctrine have been committed.

[7]Proof of this change is the declaration of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia of June 23rd, 1941 (published at the time in an illegal number of the party paper *Rudé Právo*), the text of which also was sent to me in London by our underground workers at home (again Dr. Vladimir Krajina). It was a complete reversal of policy and read as follows:

'*Proclamation of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.*

'On June 22nd there spread through the whole world like wildfire the news that barbarian, bloody German Fascism has committed a new, unheard of crime—that it has treacherously attacked the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The land of victorious Socialism, the land of freedom, progress and culture, the land to which the hope of all oppressed and enslaved peoples is turning has been attacked!

'It has been attacked because Hitlerism, that slave-driving, most barbaric regime in history, has reached the desperate conclusion that it cannot maintain its rule of murder, violence and oppression over the German Nation, over all the oppressed nations of Europe, that it cannot expand this rule throughout the world nor conquer mankind so long as there stands that strong bulwark, the support and hope of all the oppressed, the symbol of mankind, the U.S.S.R.

'The criminal attack by the gigantic, rapacious Fascist hordes, armed with all modern means of warfare, against the U.S.S.R. has started the last phase of the mad and desperate onslaught on mankind.

'The hearts of millions throughout the world are beating more quickly. A single wish, a single and imperturbable conviction, a single thought has passed through all minds and united all thoughts: this last dreadful criminal attempt must be and will be broken. This crime must be the last.

'The Czech people never felt more unitedly, deeply and strongly that indivisible and fundamental relationship, that fateful connection of our Nation with the Nations of the U.S.S.R. than they do today. To every honest Czech it is clear that the greatest, most stupendously fateful battle of all history which is being waged in the East by the Red Army against the hordes of Fascist beasts, is also a battle for our future, for our destiny, for our liberty. Our Nation will never forget that at the time of Munich, when we were betrayed and deserted by all, the U.S.S.R. alone called upon the whole world to go to our rescue. Today it is for our freedom that the sons of the peace-loving, brotherly Nations of the U.S.S.R. are laying down their lives. To them, our dear brothers, our good friends and comrades we tender our respect, our admiration, our love. The heart of our whole Nation beats in unison with theirs. To them turn the eyes and hopes of all the oppressed nations of Europe. *They, the heroic vanguard of mankind, will be victorious.* They will win because they are armed not only with the most modern weapons but also with that greatest and most powerful of all weapons: the knowledge that they are fighting for justice, for truth, for liberty and brotherhood among men and nations, for a better future for mankind. They will win because even today there stand behind them the fettered and enslaved German working people. They will win because the whole progressive world is ranging itself at their side for the struggle. All nations of the world, and at this moment even a greater number of the Governments of these nations, especially of the most mature nations, among them America and Great Britain, have realised that the most dangerous common enemy of all nations and races, the enemy against whom all the forces of the whole world must unite, is Hitler's Fascism.

'No initial success of the Hitler hordes, made possible by the very treachery of the attack, can change in any respect the early and final decision. Fascism will be conquered and pulled out by the roots—will be swept away once and for always from the face of the earth! The Czech Nation must be prepared for the last decisive fight for our existence, our freedom and our future. The hour of our liberation is approaching. The chief order of the day is the iron unity of the whole Czech Nation, of all its strata without exception. Let us form a mighty block of granite into which the treacherous monsters of the enemy of humanity, Hitler, will not be able to advance—a block upon which all attacks—moral or physical—of the Hitler barbarians and their allies, the scum of the Czech Nation, will be broken.

'Let us gather inseparably and firmly around the backbone of our Nation, around the working-class which in the factories and on the railways holds today that most important weapon, the general strike and which, at the moment it is given the order, will deal the bloody regime its first mighty blow!

'Today let us remain quiet with the maximum of caution. Let us forge our unity of steel against Fascism! Long live the unity of steel of the whole Czech Nation against Fascism! Long live the Soviet Union, its famous Red Army, our Ally!

'The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.'

[8]My exact words were: After the present collapse of the resistance of the French Army, conditions in Central and Eastern Europe will not remain as before. In the further stages

of the struggle fighting will again be transferred to that field. *Moreover, the Soviet Union is aware that Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy have their plans to destroy it and to overwhelm everything eastward and south-eastward of the German frontiers'*.—Printed in my book, *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, p. 86.

[9]At the beginning of October, 1940, I sent to Colonel Pika in Bucharest new instructions in case he was forced to leave Rumania suddenly. These especially concerned our future co-operation with the U.S.S.R. It was at the time that the 'Iron Guard' came into power in Rumania and when the Germans were already in the country to train and prepare the Rumanian Army against the Soviet Union on the invitation of the Antonescu Government.

Col. Pika and his group managed in dramatic circumstances to escape from the Gestapo and to reach Constantinople with the help of Rumanian officials (October 16th, 1940). In Turkey, Col. Pika was in permanent contact with the Soviet representatives and went with Ing. Klučka to Moscow via Odessa at the end of April, 1941.

[10]I shall deal with these negotiations in detail in the next volume of the *Memoirs*.*

[11]We received uninterrupted information of Germany's readiness for war with Russia, particularly from Prague, from our underground workers, civilians, members of Gen. Ingr's intelligence service who even had Germans among their informants. Ministerial Councillor Dr. J. Papoušek, Col. J. Balabán and Zdeněk Bořek-Dohalský especially distinguished themselves in this connection. Moreover, Ukranian emigrants, though they sometimes made fantastic reports, nevertheless revealed much. Some information also arrived from our Communists in Prague.

[12]In my speech of December 11th, 1940, to the Czechoslovak State Council—speaking of the meaning of the second World War—I stressed this point of view and declared that we must build our own policy on this basis. At that time I formulated my opinion cautiously but clearly enough for those who knew the conditions and both ideologies:

'In reality, therefore, the present war is in all its main problems a continuation of the war of 1914-1918 and it is quite unimportant whether the pretext for starting it was the German minority in Czechoslovakia or the Danzig question or anything else. In it there are the same problems, the same interests, the same battles on all their grandiose scale. The only change is that they have developed. The historic fight has reached a further, more advanced stage. The questions are posed more precisely, more radically and their final radical solution has become inevitable. The real question is whether the political victory will be won by democracy or dictatorship—Nazi totalitarianism and State absolutism. In the field of foreign policy the question is whether there will be an equalisation and more permanent balance between the Great Powers and a secure existence for the small States and Nations—whether the barbarism, inhuman and criminal Fascist and pan-German nationalism will really be liquidated definitively, too, and whether the final political, social and economic victory will rest with Fascism or Communism or with political Democracy, because it has had the courage to perform two essential tasks:

'1. To seek a more resolute solution of its internal social and economic problems and to march courageously forward into social and economic democracy;

*Not completed (Tr.).

'2. To revise everything in its own system that has, politically, not proved beneficial or has directly failed to change whatever needs redress in Parliamentarism and the party system and to carry out whatever reforms are needed to make its State administration more efficient and successful.

'Whatever the result of this struggle, we are today in the midst of a war which, as the continuation of the last war, will bring a deeper and more far-reaching general change than its predecessor. Politically, as well as socially and economically, the times which we are living through are and will be very revolutionary. At the end of the present war and during the years immediately following, we will be faced with conditions which will mean changes in the political, social and economic systems comparable perhaps to those which occurred in Europe after the French Revolution. That it will not be easy, that there will be fierce fights and difficult situations, that everywhere in Central Europe and in every direction we will have more difficult conditions to cope with after this war than after the last war and that it will be essential for our State after this war politically, socially, economically and morally to maintain even more carefully than before reasonableness, circumspection and balance—all this is self-evident.

'In my opinion, therefore, the war of 1939 is no turning-point. From the period 1914-1918 through the twenty years' fight between democracy and dictatorship in Europe, past Fascism and Hitlerism to the attack on Czechoslovakia, past Munich to the war with Poland, France and Great Britain and on, finally, to the fall of France and to the present gigantic fight of British democracy (which, though it will win and preserve its Empire, will have to face great and various changes of a revolutionary character on the European continent) all this is one immense, straight and unbroken line. Throughout, paying no heed to any party groupings and actuated solely by the interests of the State, I have stood always in one place. I have never moved from it and I do not have to move from it even today. It is the path of progress, expressing the ideals of political and moral, social and economic democracy. Once more in this renewal of the great fight for a new Europe and a new world, it must inevitably triumph.'

When I showed this speech to Šrámek as Prime Minister and Rud. Bechyně as Chairman of the State Council before the meeting of the State Council, both urged me to change the text on the ground that the Great Britain of that time (autumn 1940!) could not swallow such a revolutionary speech and that it would injure our Movement. Later, I toned down some other more radical remarks especially those which concerned Great Britain.

[18]On June 23rd, 1941, I sent the following telegram to Churchill:*

'June 23rd, 1941

WINSTON CHURCHILL,
10 DOWNING STREET.

Your address yesterday will always be remembered as an act of great statesmanship. The Czechoslovak Government in London and the Czechoslovak people at home will follow your leadership and your call with complete loyalty and firmness till final victory is reached.

Yours truly,
EDUARD BENEŠ.'

*English text not available (Tr.).

Churchill's answer arrived some days later and read:*

'I thank you for your telegram about my broadcast speech. I know very well that we can count on the Czechoslovak Government and the Czechoslovak Nation which is resolved to help us in realising our common aim with all means at its disposal.

Sincerely yours,

WINSTON CHURCHILL.'

[14]This address is printed in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War* (pp. 120–126).

[15]The following is the text of Ambassador Maisky's letter:

'London, July 16th, 1941.

'DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

'On the instructions of my Government I put forward to you the enclosed draft agreement which is to regulate the relations between our two countries until the end of the war. The draft is in Russian. I think it unnecessary to translate it into English since you understand Russian and since it is intended that the authentic text of the agreement shall be in the Russian and Czechoslovak languages.

'If you have no objections to this draft, I am authorised by my Government to sign it immediately; and we can arrange its signature without delay. If you wish to propose any changes I would first have to report back to Moscow.

'I would be much obliged if you could give me your answer as soon as possible.

'Sincerely yours,

I. MAISKY.'

On the same day, with the concurrence of Minister Jan Masaryk, I sent Maisky the following answer:

'July 16th, 1941.

'DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR,

'My sincerest thanks for your letter of July 16th, 1941, and for the draft of an agreement between the Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Republic. Fundamentally the draft agreement contains everything we discussed a week ago.

'Tomorrow I will make all necessary arrangements with J. Masaryk, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and I think there will be no objection to dealing with the matter in such a way that the agreement can be signed without delay. Mr. J. Masaryk will sign the agreement on behalf of the Czechoslovak Government.

I am, Mr. Ambassador,

Yours sincerely,

DR. E. BENEŠ.'

*English text not available (Tr.).

CHAPTER V

WAR AND THE UNITED STATES

1. *The United States in World War II*

AT the same time that Hitler came to power in Germany, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President of the United States (he assumed office on March 4th, 1933). One might almost say that this was a dispensation of Providence.

President Roosevelt was a sincere democrat and a farsighted practical politician. I already knew him quite well from the time of Wilson during the first World War. He knew how to surround himself with helpers who like him perceived the danger threatening the whole civilised world from the German desire for supremacy and new territory. The Nazi teaching of the superiority of the German race and the brutal expansiveness of Japanese imperialism were even physically repulsive to him and were fundamentally contrary to his whole being. Therefore he had already become a consistent opponent of all Fascism and Nazism at the time when the Western democracies, from inner disruption or incomprehension, were retreating before violence and were carrying out the policy of so-called 'appeasement'. He was also fully aware of the depth of spiritual decline which was apparent during the last pre-war years of European politics.

His attitude was exemplified by his speech at Chicago on October 5th, 1937, in which he said:

'. . . The present reign of terror and international lawlessness began a few years ago.

'It began through unjustified interference in the internal affairs of other nations or the invasion of alien territory in violation of treaties; and has now reached a stage where the very foundations of civilisation are seriously threatened . . .

'Without a declaration of war and without warning or justification of any kind, civilians, including vast numbers of women and children, are being ruthlessly murdered with bombs from the air . . . Nations claiming freedom for themselves deny it to others.

'Innocent peoples, innocent nations, are being cruelly sacrificed to a greed for power and supremacy which is devoid of all sense of justice and humane considerations . . .

'. . . If we are to have a world in which we can breathe freely and

live in amity without fear—the peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort to uphold laws and principles on which alone peace can rest secure.

'The peace-loving nations must make a concerted effort in opposition to those violations of treaties and those ignorings of humane instincts which today are creating a state of international anarchy and instability from which there is no escape through mere isolation or neutrality.

'Those who cherish their freedom and recognise and respect the equal right of their neighbours to be free and live in peace, must work together for the triumph of law and moral principles in order that peace, justice and confidence may prevail in the world. There must be a return to a belief in the pledged word, in the value of a signed treaty. There must be recognition of the fact that national morality is as vital as private morality . . . It is, therefore, a matter of vital interest and concern to the people of the United States that the sanctity of international treaties and the maintenance of international morality be restored . . . The questions involved relate not merely to violations of specific provisions of particular treaties; they are questions of war and peace, of international law and especially of principles of humanity . . . It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognise the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honouring sanctity of treaties, of respecting the rights and liberties of others and of putting an end to acts of international aggression . . . If civilisation is to survive the principles of the Prince of Peace must be restored. Trust between nations must be revived.

'Most important of all, the will for peace on the part of peace-loving nations must express itself to the end that nations which may be tempted to violate their agreements and the rights of others will desist from such a course. There must be positive endeavours to preserve peace.

'America hates war. America hopes for peace. Therefore, America actively engages in the search for peace.'

No wonder, that in his declaration of war against the United States in December, 1941, Hitler referred to this speech in his characteristic and uncultured manner.

Actuated by these moral principles and views about political morality, Roosevelt tried to mediate in the Czechoslovak crisis of September, 1938, but without result. His attitude to the violation of what was left of Czechoslovakia in March, 1939, was inspired by the same motives.

Here I will briefly mention only how he tried to help the Allies from the

time of the outbreak of war in Europe to the moment when Japan suddenly attacked the United States and America therefore entered the second world conflict. As a result of Japan's action, Germany and Italy also declared war on the United States.

The neutrality legislation of the United States prohibited the delivery of war material to parties waging war. In April, 1937, there was a change according to which the President of the United States was authorised to allow the export of war material if the buyer paid for this material in advance and carried it in his own ships. This regulation, known as 'Cash and Carry' was valid for two years only and its validity ended on May 1st, 1939, shortly before the war started. When, therefore, on September 5th, 1939, the Government of the United States proclaimed its neutrality in the European war, which had then begun, Roosevelt signed the neutrality law without the 'Cash and Carry' clause. But it was clear to President Roosevelt that the unprepared democracies would urgently need help against the perfectly equipped aggressor. Already in his message to Congress of January 4th, 1939, he had expressed his apprehension that the neutrality legislation of the United States as then formulated would give aid to the aggressor and refuse it to his victim. He referred to this speech when he asked Congress on September 21st, 1939, to amend the neutrality law and, especially, to abolish the general arms export embargo and to reintroduce the 'Cash and Carry' clause. These changes were accepted after lengthy discussions and from November 4th, 1939, when President Roosevelt signed the new bill, Great Britain and France were able to get war material from the United States for their own requirements and so far as their financial resources permitted. Though this aid was considerable, especially when after some hesitation the United States also allowed the sale of the most modern types of weapons, it was nevertheless limited by the buying power and the currency reserves of the buyers. After the fall of France practically the only buyer was Great Britain.

On November 28th, 1940, Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador at Washington, disclosed at a press conference that British currency reserves in the United States were nearly exhausted and asked for further help. Shortly afterwards, on December 18th, 1940, President Roosevelt explained his plan of 'Lend-Lease.' He justified this on the ground that Great Britain would get more aid without incurring an immediate financial burden though at the same time the United States was also arming.

According to this plan which he laid before the Senate and House of Representatives as a Bill on January 11th, 1941, after beginning his third term as President, the President of the United States was to be authorised

to allow war material to be made and sold to Governments named by him or to lend it to them or to exchange it or make it available to them in other ways. In addition the President was to be authorised to supply foreign Governments with certain military information and to give permission for foreign war material to be repaired in the United States. In practice, this meant that damaged British ships could be repaired in the harbours and docks of the United States. The law, which was passed on March 11th, 1941, after some minor changes, was rightly regarded as a law to provide aid for Great Britain and after it was passed President Roosevelt was justified in saying that 'the greatest industrial nation of the world has become an arsenal of the democracies'.

The validity of this law, which originally was to expire on June 30th, 1943, lasted to the end of the war and its scope was gradually extended to all countries defending themselves against aggression. All the Allies therefore benefited from it, including the Soviet Union, which is also greatly indebted to this law.

The United States also helped the Allies in another direction. It was not only a question of deliveries but also of their arriving safely at their destination. Germany hindered this by the submarine war which was countered by Great Britain by the system of convoying ships and guarding the convoys with warships. The British Navy was overstrained after the fall of France and lacked escort vessels. Roosevelt therefore assigned 50 destroyers to Great Britain on September 3rd, 1940, in exchange for the lease of some British islands to the United States for 99 years for the construction of naval and air bases. In the existing legal conditions, this system of lease for the construction of the bases which proved very valuable when the United States entered the war was the only one which could be used for quick and effective help.

Nor was this all. On July 8th, 1941, Roosevelt announced that American naval units had landed in Iceland and taken over its protection. On July 20th, 1941, he declared that it was necessary to ensure the safety of the supplies for the American forces in Iceland and Greenland, and he therefore ordered that U.S. ships carrying supplies to these islands should be guarded en route by warships not only against an actual attack but also against a threat of attack.

This meant, in practice, that the United States took over the protection of convoys nearly to the coast of England and in this way they guarded an important part of the British traffic routes. A final step—the greatest assistance which could at that time be given to Great Britain—was taken by the United States on November 14th, 1941. On that day the House of Repre-

sentatives passed another amendment to the Neutrality Law allowing U.S. merchant vessels to carry war material to British ports. At that period, the United States delivered to Great Britain 50 per cent of their production of war material and transported it to Great Britain.

After the attack on the Soviet Union, Roosevelt's most important contribution was his joint declaration with Churchill, the so-called Atlantic Charter of August 14th, 1941, every paragraph of which contradicted the principles of policy practised by the Axis Powers.

All laws concerning aid to Great Britain and, later, to the Allies, meant bitter fights for Roosevelt and his collaborators—sometimes in difficult conditions. The year 1940 was a year of failure for the Allies and in the second half of the year Great Britain stood quite alone in the fight against Germany and Italy. In the United States it was the year of the presidential election during which President Roosevelt had to occupy himself with special American conditions and questions and had to consider the American public which was influenced by isolationists and their propaganda which (as Germany was counting upon) fell on good ground among certain sections of American public opinion. Roosevelt was obliged to conduct the fight against isolationist propaganda, and against barren absolute neutrality in which Hitler was interested, as perseveringly as the fight for arming the United States. He knew that the United States had to prepare for the moment when they would be forced to take an active part in the war. This danger arose immediately after the conclusion of the Three Power Pact in Berlin on September 27th, 1940, when Germany, Italy and Japan jointly threatened united opposition to the United States if the latter should stand in the way of the programme of expansion of the three signatories. Roosevelt's far-sighted efforts secured results in this field, too. On September 16th, 1941, he was able to sign the law on general military conscription according to which it was possible to call up nearly 17 million men between 21 and 35 years of age for the defence of the United States.

To Roosevelt's unceasing efforts and his practical policy the United States and the whole civilized world owe the fact that when Japan, modelling itself on the Fascist States, attacked the United States (December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbour) and when Germany and Italy followed Japan's action by declaring war (December 11th, 1941), the United States in spite of the opposition of the isolationists and the advocates of absolute neutrality were prepared both morally and materially to throw themselves into the war and carry it through to a victorious end together with their Allies.

2. *The United States and Munich*

The attitude of the United States of America to Czechoslovakia during the second World War was characterised by a policy based upon a certain kind of legal continuity. During and after the crisis of September, 1938, the American public was extraordinarily disturbed by all that happened, by the actions of the European Great Powers against Czechoslovakia, and especially by the way in which this European crisis was solved by the Munich Agreement. The American press published very detailed reports on the events of those days, the broadcast gave them quite extraordinary attention and the real sympathies of American public opinion were undoubtedly *always* on our side.

When I went to the United States in February, 1939, I found that in a number of important matters the American public was more solidly and objectively informed about the events of Munich than public opinion in France or in Great Britain where the information released to the public was intentionally and tendentiously coloured by the policy of 'appeasement.'[1]

But it seemed—this is now clearly established by official documents—that official circles in Washington were seriously divided in their views about the September crisis and that therefore there was a considerable degree of uncertainty. There can be no doubt that *some* circles in Washington were resolutely *against* the policy of appeasement as practised by most of Europe against the German and Italian dictators *and especially against the way in which the policy was carried out* and of course, its results and consequences. In particular, this was the attitude of President F. D. Roosevelt himself.

But it is equally true that other circles—also official—*were essentially entangled in the Munich policy and had a certain responsibility for it.* The U.S. Ambassador in London, *Joseph Kennedy*, stood expressly and consistently behind Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. He supported it everywhere and unreservedly identified himself with it both during his stay in Great Britain in 1938 and 1939, after his return to the U.S. and during the presidential election campaign for Roosevelt's third term. Chamberlain more than once took advantage of Kennedy's attitude.

The American Ambassador in Berlin, *Hugh Wilson*, fully believed even in August, 1938, that a peaceful orientation of German policy was not impossible. When in August, 1938, events in Prague neared the culmination of the crisis, he came to Prague from Berlin to inform himself of our situation. He spoke with the American and British Ministers in Prague.

He had a long talk with Lord Runciman and finally, on August 6th, 1938, he also visited me. His naive belief in the peaceful intentions of the Berlin Government amazed me. He told me expressly that Göring did not want a war and that he was surely working for peace and for an agreement both with us and the others.

Hugh Wilson was sincere. He had a sympathetic feeling for us dating from the first World War and he did not want to harm us. But he was quite erroneously informed about Germany and its intentions and plans. Probably he also informed Washington on these lines. And as he himself stressed at a meeting of bankers and economists in Chicago in 1939, after he had been recalled from Berlin, the first and paramount interest of the United States at that time was to avoid a new war in Europe in which America would again have to intervene. It was from this standpoint that he looked at the policy of 'appeasement.'

The United States Ambassador in Paris, *William Bullitt*, did not at first express himself publicly in favour of 'appeasement' like J. Kennedy, but he worked for it incessantly. His attitude towards us during the crisis of September, 1938, was wholly negative. He did not hide this. Daladier clearly hinted on many occasions that his policy of 'appeasement' had the support of the American Ambassador and therefore also of the United States. Bullitt himself did all he could to prevent a new great war. He made it clear though with reservations (thus providing himself with an alibi) that in his view Prague was not behaving with sufficient circumspection towards the German minority and that President Beneš was a dyed-in-the-wool anti-German chauvinist whose policy was endangering European peace.

Bullitt's own policy at that time and later was mainly dictated by his dislike—his personal dislike—of the Soviet Union which he acquired while he was Ambassador in Moscow. His actions were directed principally against the Soviets and found expression again in a decisive manner later when together with Daladier and Bonnet he planned and secured the expulsion of the Soviet Union from the League of Nations for making war against Finland. He was said at that time to have sent a telegram to Washington in which he declared that he had at last got full satisfaction—that is to say, for what he had experienced in Moscow as Ambassador. He pursued this policy in Paris until the fall of France and later—it seems—in America also where, according to all reports, he supported to some extent the Pétain regime at Vichy against De Gaulle.

On the whole it was natural and comprehensible that the United States should view the possibility of an armed conflict in Europe with anxiety

and that they should work deliberately and systematically against such an eventuality both in September, 1938, and later. A more than clear indication of the United States' attitude is given in the official publication of the State Department, *Peace and War*,[1] issued in January, 1943, and containing an official account of U.S. foreign policy from 1931–1941.

This document proves how the United States worked for the preservation of peace throughout this period; how on September 26th, 1938, President Roosevelt in his message to Germany, Czechoslovakia, France and Great Britain appealed to them not to stop negotiations for an agreement between Berlin and Prague; how, furthermore, on September 27th, 1938, Cordell Hull sent instructions to all U.S. representatives abroad to urge the Governments to which they were accredited to approach Berlin and Prague with similar appeals.[2] And it adds, that on the same day (September 27th, 1938), Roosevelt turned directly to Mussolini asking him to use his influence in Berlin so that the conflict between Prague and Berlin might be solved by peaceful negotiations and not by war. But the same document immediately proceeds to point out—and I stress this—that after the signature of the Munich Agreement, State Secretary Cordell Hull said quite clearly in a public address, *that the Munich Agreement neither assured peace nor did it rest on sound political and moral principles.*

These facts are the best indication of the general direction of U.S. foreign policy at the time of the crisis which led to Munich.

When I went to the United States in February, 1939, I saw at once that in North America as elsewhere the isolationists and appeasers were powerful enough. But the whole American public as well as official circles in Washington were aware of the fact that a great wrong had been done to Czechoslovakia. They said so openly. In all parts of the United States which Jan Masaryk or I visited on our lecturing tours in 1939, we found that public opinion, the press, most of the intelligentsia, important politicians and responsible people in general were agreed on this point. At that time this was a great moral support for us, It kept our hopes alive and encouraged us in our future activity.

I have already recounted how President Roosevelt and the Washington Government reacted to the occupation of Prague on March 15th, 1939, and to the attempts to destroy Czechoslovakia, and also how Minister Hurban saved our Legation which the American Government continued to recognise. In this way, the American Government showed clearly that from the point of international law and policy it did not regard the Czechoslovak chapter as closed. I have also mentioned my talk with President Roosevelt at Hyde Park on May 28th, 1939, and with State

Secretary Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles on June 29th and 30th, 1939. All these things meant that when the time came we would be able to start up our activities in the United States—with due regard to existing laws and the U.S. policy of neutrality—and link them with our liberation campaign as soon as war broke out in Europe.

Here three facts were of essential importance for our future:

(*a*) The United States—as a cardinal principle of policy which had already been publicly proclaimed by President Coolidge—did not recognise the occupation of any State by force.

(*b*) They were not, nor did they feel, bound by the unilateral decision of the four European Great Powers at Munich in which they themselves had taken no official part.

(*c*) They did not intend to change their attitude towards Czechoslovakia, the Legations and Consulates of which did not cease to function and continued to be officially recognised by the Government of the United States.

The U.S. Government, having taken this far-sighted legal and political attitude, which morally was the only right one, *maintained it consistently up to the final favourable legal solution of our whole problem in the United States in* 1943.

3. *The United States and the Recognition of Our London Government*

When we established the Czechoslovak National Committee in France and Great Britain after the outbreak of war in September, 1939, we desisted on the advice of Minister Hurban from trying to obtain recognition of the Committee by the United States. The position of our Legation was very strong and the U.S. Government had taken a firm legal stand in our affairs. Furthermore, the United States were neutral and it was therefore of greater advantage to await developments. But when on July 21st, 1940, the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in London was recognised by the British Government and then by a number of other Allied Governments, we asked confidentially in Washington whether the American Government was ready to extend the legal position which it had taken towards the Czechoslovak diplomatic and consular authorities, to cover in addition the newly-established Czechoslovak Government.

The most important point was that the Government of the United States had no objection to our representatives in America at once proclaiming their submission to the authority of our new Government nor to

their accepting its leadership and instructions by becoming an integral part of our State organisation. It furthermore hinted to us that the logic of events might lead to the recognition of the Government having regard to the fact that the U.S. Government's policy towards Czechoslovakia remained unchanged—*the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak State had never lapsed so far as the U.S. Government was concerned*—and that the question of the recognition of the Czechoslovak Government was being examined carefully at Washington.[4] This was the starting point from which Minister Hurban proceeded with his cautious and tactful moves and from which other people, too, helped us in Washington from the beginning of 1941—as, for example, our American friends in political and University circles, our National Council in Chicago and others.

Early in 1941 the American Ambassador J. G. Winant, arrived in Great Britain and I contacted him on March 28th, 1941. This was the beginning of regular political co-operation. I kept him systematically informed of our progress, of the development of our affairs and of our international position as well as of our negotiations for recognition by Great Britain. He showed a very positive attitude towards us from the outset and helped Czechoslovakia very effectively in Washington.

By June, 1941, Minister Hurban himself thought the situation was already ripe for the recognition of our Government by Washington. On July 24th, 1941, President Roosevelt himself received him personally to discuss this matter. Minister Hurban again outlined to the President the whole situation of the Nation at home as well as the political and legal position of our London Government. At the same time he delivered my personal letter to the President dated June 4th, 1941, in which I formulated our request for the recognition of our Government. In it I reminded Roosevelt of our conversation in Hyde Park in May, 1939, informed him of the state of our resistance movement at home and abroad and the position in regard to our recognition by other States. I acknowledged how much the United States had already done for us during this war and emphasized the importance for our people at home if the United States were now to show, by recognising the London Government, what was their final policy towards our country.[5]

On July 29th the State Department informed Minister Hurban that it had been decided to recognise the Czechoslovak Government in London, that I would receive a direct answer to my letter from President Roosevelt to this effect and that the American Ambassador, Mr. J. G. Winant, would at the same time be instructed to deliver an official Note to Minister Masaryk.

Some days later Ambassador Winant brought me this personal letter from President Roosevelt:

'White House, Washington *July 30th, 1941*

DEAR DOCTOR BENEŠ,

I read your letter of June 4th with great care. I remember with pleasure the conversation we had at Hyde Park two years ago. We discussed as you will remember the unhappy events which had befallen Czechoslovakia and your future plans for the fight to restore your country's freedom.

The cause of the Czechoslovak Nation has always been near to the heart of the American people. We have not forgotten its struggle for independence and we remember with pride how the Government and people of the United States in the preceding generation took part wholeheartedly in the efforts of that great statesman Thomas Masaryk and his collaborators, you among them, to establish a democratic republic in Central Europe in order to secure the liberty, and to permit the free political existence, of the Czechoslovak people.

Since that day there have been specially close relations between our two democracies. We have unlimited confidence in the vitality of your people as a nation and look forward eagerly to the day when democratic institutions shall again flourish in your beautiful country.

In order that the ties between our two nations should not be broken, we have not ceased to recognise the diplomatic and consular representatives of Czechoslovakia in the United States in the full exercise of their functions. We have also borne in mind the courage and ability of the armed forces and political leaders of Czechoslovakia who organised themselves abroad to continue the struggle for the re-establishment of liberty in their country. It is therefore with real pleasure that I can inform you—and I am sure that my feelings are shared by the whole American Nation—that the American Government has decided to accredit an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in London for closer contact in the common interests of the two countries until the institutions of free government are re-established in Czechoslovakia. We are at the same time sending instructions to the American Ambassador in London to inform the provisional Czechoslovak Government.

I take this opportunity to assure you of the firm hope of the people of the United States that the cause of Czechoslovak freedom will triumph.

Very sincerely yours,

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT.'

On August 1st, Jan Masaryk received a Note from Ambassador Winant which defined the attitude of the Government of the United States as follows:

'London, July 31st, 1941

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

The Secretary of State has directed me to inform Your Excellency that the Government of the United States, mindful of the friendship and special interest which has existed between the peoples of the United States and Czechoslovakia since the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, has watched with admiration the efforts of the people of Czechoslovakia to maintain their national existence, notwithstanding the suppression of the institutions of free government in their country.

The American Government has not acknowledged that the temporary extinguishment of their liberties has taken from the people of Czechoslovakia their rights and privileges in international affairs, and it has continued to recognise the diplomatic and consular representatives of Czechoslovakia in the United States in the full exercise of their functions.

In furtherance of its support of the national aspirations of the people of Czechoslovakia, the Government of the United States is now prepared to enter into formal relations with the provisional government established at London for the prosecution of the war and the restoration of the freedom of the Czechoslovak people, under the presidency of Dr. Beneš, and while continuing its relations with the Czechoslovak Legation at Washington would be pleased to accredit to the provisional Government an Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary, to reside in London, for the conduct of relations pending the re-establishment of the Government in Czechoslovakia.

I shall later communicate with Your Excellency regarding the diplomatic representative whom my Government would like to designate.

Accept, Your Excellency, etc.

JOHN G. WINANT.'

We were informed at the same time that the Government of the United States had no obligations in respect of the question of definite frontiers.

These events brought near to a successful end our struggle for the restoration of their former international, political, diplomatic and legal position to our country and Nation. The decision of President Roosevelt was a final and decisive blow to the whole German action of that time against the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia and against the freedom of its people. It was also the *last* step needed for the re-establishment of the international legal, political and diplomatic pre-Munich position of

Czechoslovakia in the whole world. It is necessary to stress especially that this recognition was secured *when the United States were actually still neutral* and that our move for recognition by the United States had actually begun before our full and definite recognition by Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

Afterwards it was not even necessary to negotiate for a *definitive* and full recognition by the United States. The events themselves provided for this. After the British and Soviet recognition on July 18th, 1941, our international legal and political situation improved rapidly and it was gradually rounded off by recognitions from all the free countries of the world. From that time in the spheres of diplomacy and international law it was impossible to doubt what the political result of the war and of Allied war policy would be for our country.

The Czechoslovak Government headed by the second President of the Republic was again recognised as the fully legal Government of the former State by the following countries: China as the fourth Great Power waging war against the Axis countries on August 27th, 1941, Norway on October 12th, 1940, Poland on November 27th, 1940, Belgium on December 13th, 1940, Egypt on March 13th, 1941, the Netherlands on March 15th, 1941, Yugoslavia on May 19th, 1941. Diplomatic relations were established with Ireland on July 28th, 1941, with Luxemburg on February 27th, 1942, with Mexico on March 26th, 1942, with Iran on May 27th, 1942, with Bolivia on June 5th, 1942, with Uruguay on June 29th, 1942, with Cuba on July 4th, 1942, with Peru on July 6th, 1942, with the Dominican Republic on July 10th, 1942, with Greece on August 19th, 1942, with Brazil on September 16th, 1942, with Ecuador on January 13th, 1943, with Colombia and Venezuela on January 9th, 1943, with Chile on March 31st, 1943.

As is well known the United States entered the war only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on December 7th, 1941, by which spectacular act Japan joined the imperialist war launched by Germany and Italy. From that moment Washington changed from its semi-belligerent participation, during which it had not taken part in armed operations against Germany and had remained legally neutral in spite of its extensive help to the democratic Powers, to full and many-sided participation in the political, diplomatic and military activities of the democratic Powers against German, Italian and Japanese Nazism and Fascism.

With the Fighting France Committee, led by General De Gaulle, the Czechoslovak Government began official relations immediately after its first British recognition. It regarded 'Fighting France' from the beginning

as the real representative of the French people, and later, in the autumn of 1943, it transferred this co-operation automatically to the Committee for National Liberation at Algiers. In the League of Nations and the International Labour Office the representation of the Czechoslovak Republic had never ceased to exist. With some neutral countries our representatives were either recognised *de facto* or at least were tolerated in spite of the pressure and the difficulties which these States experienced from the Germans.

It was in such circumstances that the United States of America conceded to us, without new formal diplomatic negotiations or formalities in regard to international law, the same diplomatic status as the other Governments in exile. They accredited their envoy to us and finally *informed Minister Masaryk officially on October 26th, 1942, that the recognition by the United States was to be regarded legally as complete and definite.* A similar statement was made to me two days later, on our National Independence Day, by Minister Biddle who added that the United States were looking forward to my paying an official visit to Washington in due course as Head of the State in the same way as the Heads of State of the other exiled Governments in London had already done. The visit took place in May, 1943.

4. *The United States Enter the War—My Official Visit to Washington*

At Christmas, 1942, our Minister in Washington, Vladimír Hurban, came to London to acquaint himself with our position in Great Britain. He also brought me a message from President Roosevelt in which that eminent, leading Allied statesman asked me to pay an official visit to the United States and to discuss our own and allied war problems. Our London Government at once decided that I should go.

I therefore answered at once to that effect and decided that politically I would link my visit with my, already planned, journey to the Soviet Union. The whole war policy of the Allies was for me one unified whole because in World War II all world problems were more than ever intertwined and it was quite impossible to solve one independently of the others. I therefore mapped out a comprehensive plan for myself. In the spring I would go first to Washington and then soon after my return I would go from London to Moscow.

It was, of course, necessary to prepare for the journey politically by conversations with the British as well as, in particular, by discussions with Moscow. During March and April, 1943, I placed a number of questions before Envoy Bogomolov with a view to defining our relations with the

Soviet Union, ascertaining the attitude of Moscow to a number of European questions (especially concerning Germany) and finding out the general attitude of the Soviet Union to important individual questions of Allied war policy as a whole. In the course of these conversations all the articles of our future treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union which we wanted to conclude during my visit to Moscow were agreed upon in principle.

All these preparations and conversations were concluded during April and I started on my journey to the United States on May 6th, 1943. On a beautiful May day we flew from London—first to an airport in Scotland from which the Transatlantic planes normally started. On the same evening we flew to Iceland. This was our first stop. There we were taken over by the Americans who with true American lavishness had built a huge air and military basis for the American Army some 10 kilometres south of Rejkjavik. After sunset we started again and early on the second day completed the second lap of our journey when we landed on the South-Western coast of Greenland. From here we started for the third stage from Greenland to Canada where we again made a short stop. On the afternoon of the same day we arrived at the well-known La Guardia Air Port, New York.

The air journey of myself and my companions who included Minister Smutný and my Secretary Dr. Táborský was kept secret because we were officially due to arrive in New York some days later. In those days when flying was still a somewhat unusual way to cross the Atlantic, this was a most interesting experience and a politically valuable one in view of the interest it aroused.

On the following day I at once met Minister Hurban and Dr. Papánek. I discussed with them the situation in the United States and all the problems which would arise during my conversations with President Roosevelt and his collaborators. Then we officially announced our arrival to Washington.

During my stay in Washington in May and June, 1943, I had above all a number of personal political conversations with President Roosevelt, State Secretary Cordell Hull, the high officials of the State Department, Sumner Welles and Berle, Vice-President Henry Wallace, the Secretary for Finance, Morgenthau and Secretaries Stimson and Knox, as well as with a number of Senators, Congressmen and political, military, economic and financial personalities. I gave an official address on Czechoslavakia, its mission, its policy and its position in Europe to both houses of the American Congress and in the name of the Nation I reaffirmed my confi-

dence in the strength and vitality of our future democracy.' Once again I could watch the people of the United States, their mood, their views and endeavours, their morale, their war effort—which at that time was already so enormous that it can hardly be expressed in words—and their plans for future victory and future peace.

On the invitation of the Canadian Prime Minister, Mr. Mackenzie King, I went on June 2nd to pay an official visit to Canada, too. There, from June 2nd to 5th, I had a similar experience and I was able to make precisely the same estimate of the views and war efforts of Canada. In conversations with Prime Minister Mackenzie King and a number of other members of the Canadian Government, I learned how strongly Canada felt about the injustice of Munich and how the sympathies of the people with Czechoslovakia had been maintained to their full extent. For the rest, my political talks in Canada dealt with the same problems as in the United States. The chief of them was the Soviet Union.

The political aspect of my journey and all my conversations in Washington were, above all, a public and, in a sense, almost a demonstrative confirmation and ratification of our official international position in the United States and the rest of the world. This stressed further that the United States did not recognise anything that had happened to us in the years 1938 and 1939, that the Republic still fully existed for them from the international standpoint, that the Munich frontiers and everything connected with them whether concerning Slovakia, Hungary, our Germans or anyone else*, had no international validity and that the Slovak question, the question of our Germans, the question of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia were regarded as our internal questions.

All our official conversations were conducted in this spirit. Between us and the U.S. Government everything was quite straightforward: there were no misunderstandings or legal obscurities, neither were there at that time any differences of opinion concerning our basic problems. It stood to reason, of course, that the final solution of a number of important questions would be authoritatively discussed by us only at the moment of the armistice and peace—*especially details about frontiers*—but that was the same with all other countries.

The whole war against Germany, Italy and Japan with all their satellites was simply considered to be one common war. Here, too, I became convinced of the horrible danger into which Slovakia had been brought by the treason of Tiso, Tuka, Sidor, Mach, Čatlos and all the other traitors. And especially the fact that they were waging war not only against the

*The Poles had annexed Tešin (Tr.).

Soviet Union but also against Great Britain and the United States, prejudiced us greatly in the eyes of many Americans and very seriously endangered the interests of the Slovak people.

I was in America at the time of the gravest military failures of the Germans on the Eastern Front when German anti-Soviet propaganda ran amok in trying to evoke differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. This was one of the last attempts to save Germany. But during my sojourn in the United States I could myself see the results of this campaign. It not only brought about official talks between the United States and the Soviet Union but also great public discussions. I myself took part in these conversations and discussions both by personal contact with Roosevelt, Cordell Hull, Sumner Welles, Berle, Hopkins and others, and also in public meetings and in various pronouncements.

As is known, the result was that German and Hungarian propaganda gave me the title of a Bolshevik agent and agent of Stalin. But I was very satisfied at that time with the results of this great international discussion. It was more than ever before clear to everybody in America that the war could be won only by the close and loyal co-operation of the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union—and, of course, the other Allied Nations, too. This was already paving the way for the well-known Moscow Conference of the three Foreign Ministers (Molotov, Hull, Eden) which took place in October, 1943, and which in its decisions was of such great importance for the final victory of the Allies.

I came to Washington at rather a special moment. The United States were entering a period of the war which for them pointed to certain victory. For a foreigner that feeling of certainty about ultimate victory was quite overwhelming. The military consequences of the Anglo-American occupation of North Africa which had been carried out courageously and successfully at the end of the preceding year now began to show themselves. And as the Soviet Union was not taking part in the Italian campaign, the necessity of reaching greater harmony in the political and diplomatic and, of course, in the military direction of the war was also becoming apparent. There was continuous contact between Roosevelt and Churchill and just one day before my arrival in Washington, Winston Churchill himself had arrived in that city for new consultations.

The most serious items in my discussions at that time (after our relations with the United States and all the Czechoslovak political and diplomatic problems) were the question of France, the Pétain regime, the recognition of De Gaulle, the future of the campaign against Italy, the forthcoming negotiations about Poland and its relations with the Soviet Union and the

final elucidation of the position of Great Britain and the United States towards the Soviet Union—all these were always on the daily programme. Finally there was already arising very urgently the question: What did each of the Allies intend to do with Germany at the end of the war.

After an official dinner in the White House on May 12th, 1943, at which most of the members of the U.S. Government, a number of Congressmen and Senators and some military advisers of President Roosevelt were present, we went with the President to his study and remained there until 2 a.m. in a lively and frank discussion of all the diplomatic and military questions mentioned above. Minister Vladimir Hurban and Minister Jaromir Smutný were present.

The discussions opened with the question of France. Roosevelt explained to me the reasons for his caution towards De Gaulle. He analysed conditions in France, Algiers and Morocco, as he had seen them during the Casablanca Conference with Winston Churchill, and expressed rather pessimistic views of the further development of the whole country and the French Empire. He reckoned with a very long duration of convalescence of France even in case of a full victory over Germany. His views of the matter gave me a clear sense that he felt a kind of personal disappointment about France in general. This was visible in his behaviour towards the Pétain regime as well as towards the De Gaulle movement.

I tried to defend France and to prove the necessity for all of us, without regard to his and Churchill's differences with De Gaulle, to help France find its feet quickly and to put that country into the ranks of the fighting European Great Powers. 'On the European Continent', I argued, 'it is necessary in the interest of Europe and the rest of the world, and having in view the future situation of Germany, that there should be again in addition to the Soviet Union one other strong democratic Great Power—France.' But the President criticised the French régime in the colonies as he had seen it during his recent sojourn in North Africa, and he doubted whether post-war France would be able to keep all its colonies. I think that, broadly speaking, he appreciated my arguments but for the time being his attitude continued to be reserved.

Then we turned to Poland and the Soviet Union. It was at the moment when the differences between them were reaching their climax and when the Allies—especially Great Britain and the United States—had to take a definite decision in this question. Millions of American Poles intervened strongly in this dispute and their influence on the forthcoming American presidential elections played a great rôle. From the attitude of Roosevelt as expressed in the discussion—and even more from the opinions of Harry

Hopkins, the personal adviser of Roosevelt, which Hopkins explained to me himself in another talk on the following day—I realised that the United States had already taken a definite attitude: that, essentially, they had accepted the view of the Soviet Union on the question of changing the former Eastern frontier of Poland and that in principle they agreed that there would have to be an agreement between Poland and the Soviet Union and some co-operation between them. Failing this, the United States were not inclined to support the action Poland was taking at this time. In particular, I came to the conclusion (this was *my* estimate of the outcome of the Washington talks) that the ideas of the London Poles—and, of course, of their Government, too—who believed that the Polish demands against the Soviet Union were supported by the United States were illusions or pious hopes and that it was a total mistake to think that the influence of the American Poles could work a fundamental change in this regard. State Secretary Sumner Welles formulated this attitude to me on the following day just as definitely.

In the course of the discussion, I raised the question of our relations with the Soviet Union. I shall tell in detail elsewhere how these relations developed. At present I shall only stress that when preparing in London for the journey to Washington, I sent word to Moscow through Ambassador Bogomolov that it would be well if, before my visit to America, I could know some of the fundamental views of the Soviet Union concerning Germany, France, Poland and ourselves, too, so that I could give the correct answer to questions on the subjects in Washington. As I explain elsewhere in this book*, I put a number of very precise questions to Bogomolov and I also got precise answers. Among those which were put and answered were the question of our formal treaty with the Soviet Union, the question of Soviet policy in regard to Germany, the Soviet attitude to the whole Polish problem, etc. Substantially I had already agreed with Bogomolov—and through him with Moscow—on the wording of our treaty of alliance and on the support of the Soviet Union in the ultimate solution of the problem of our relations with our Germans. I therefore went to Washington with, in the main, a clear idea of how our relations with the Soviet Union would very soon develop.

These then were the lines on which the conversations with Roosevelt developed concerning all these questions. I told him that I knew what course the Soviet Union intended to take and realised that this necessitated our accommodating ourselves to its policy. I told Roosevelt openly that we could not accept another Munich in future and that this already obliged

*See pp. 241 sqq. (Tr.).

us to consider a treaty with the Soviet Union. I told him further that it was clear to me that we would be neighbours of the Soviet Union and that this fact would exercise a certain influence on our internal policy in connection with our future social and economic development. Finally, I told him that after my return to England from America I intended to go immediately to Moscow and conclude a formal agreement with the Soviet Union. I added that I believed Poland, too, should follow a similar policy and should thus enable the three chief Powers to reach final accord in the Polish question.

After some further discussion of these matters Roosevelt expressed his full understanding of this policy. I have already mentioned that Harry Hopkins, the intimate political collaborator of Roosevelt, spoke to the same effect and so also did Sumner Welles. While I was still in Washington I received from London Bogomolov's report of the positive attitude of the Soviet Union in regard to the transfer of our Germans after the end of the war. I hinted to Roosevelt how we and the Soviet Union looked at this question. Roosevelt said plainly that Munich had been such a lesson for the whole world that the problem of our Germans would have to be examined in detail and *that it would have to receive a radical and courageous solution in accordance with the results of our detailed studies.* I therefore regarded it as a certainty (and rightly) that when the question of the transfer of the Germans became a concrete one, the United States would support us. And this actually happened.

I had two more opportunities of speaking to Roosevelt of all these questions—and some others—on the above lines.

From Washington I went for longer trips through the United States. I visited a number of industrial, military and other centres. I saw the enormous war efforts of the United States and I came again to the conclusion that the Allies would win a complete and decisive victory. In particular, I visited New York, Chicago, Detroit and other cities. Everywhere I gave public addresses in which I spoke openly of my attitude to current political and diplomatic problems. In Chicago I was received with full ceremony at the University of which I was still a professor. Everywhere—and on every occasion—I was asked about the future development of the Soviet Union, of its possible co-operation with the Western Powers, of its attitude to its future neighbours and to small countries in general, of its intentions to revolutionise and to communise the world, etc., etc. In general my answers were variants of the views I expressed later in the last chapter of my book *Democracy Today and Tomorrow*, and of what I said about Slav policy in my book *Essays on Slavism*.

I would also like to mention briefly our conference with Roosevelt and Winston Churchill on May 13th, the day after my arrival at Washington. Roosevelt asked me to this meeting so that I could tell them both my views about the question of the partition of Germany. I was cautious because I did not consider this matter to be ripe yet and because I did not know the precise attitude of the others—especially of the Soviet Union. But I expressed my firm conviction that it would be absolutely necessary to try the German war criminals, that it would be necessary to organise a profound and durable re-education of the German people and that without considerable decentralisation and substantial changes in the German social structure, post-war Germany would not develop into a really peaceful and democratic Germany.

I considered this visit and my talks with Roosevelt—which I have summarized here very briefly—to be another great milestone in our war policy. The visit was wholly successful and the results of the political talks which took place were for us decisive. Especially I want to stress *that in the course of the discussion of our problems with Roosevelt I twice examined with him in detail all the reasons and the procedure for the transfer of our Germans from Czechoslovakia to Germany. I found with the President the same full understanding* which he had shown in all questions concerning Munich. *And already on that occasion he gave me his full consent to the execution of the transfer of the greatest possible number of our Germans.*[8]

I left Washington confirmed in the conviction that it was necessary to round off my negotiations in London and Washington by means of a visit to Moscow and that I should make this visit immediately after my return to England from the United States.*

There are but few examples in history of a small State in times of storm and revolution securing such satisfaction for its policy and recognition of the correctness of its conduct as was afforded by this journey of mine. Already in the summer of 1943, I obtained a very strong impression of this fact—so important politically for my country and Nation—in the reception accorded to me when I visited the United States and Canada.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

[1]During my stay in the United States in 1938 the American broadcasting companies presented me with copies of all speeches, addresses, news items and commentaries issued by the American radio systems during the Munich crisis. These made a large and imposing pile which proved with what political earnestness the United States had watched the Munich crisis.

*Dr. Beneš's account of the visit to Moscow is given in the final chapter of this volume (Tr.).

[2]*Peace and War, United States Foreign Policy, 1931–41*, published by the American State Department in January, 1943.

[3]I had already realised in September, 1938, that the telegrams of all the South-American States firmly requesting me not to go to war with Germany in any circumstance and to save peace, were sent on the initiative of the United States of America. In September, 1938, such an appeal—contrary to the intentions of the United States and of President Roosevelt—served the interests of Hitler. At that time German propaganda exploited this telegram of Roosevelt's and the appeals of the South American States to our disadvantage, interpreting them as aimed against us and for Munich. Thus, against the intentions of their authors, these telegrams dealt us the final blow before Munich.

[4]State Secretary Cordell Hull replied in this sense to a question on May 14th, 1941, from Congressman J. Sabath and to one from Senator J. Lee on June 12th, 1941, concerning the attitude of the United States to the Czechoslovak Government in London. His letter to Senator Lee read as follows:

'Dear Senator Lee,

I am acknowledging your letter of May 29th, 1941, with which you enclosed the communication from Mr. Petr Rabštejnek on the relations of the United States to Czechoslovakia. *The Government of the United States has never revoked the recognition of the Czechoslovak State and will continue to recognise the national integrity and the international status of Czechoslovakia.* It is continuing to recognise Mr. Vladimír Hurban as the Czechoslovak Minister to the United States and also the Consular officials under his direction. In this connection I wish to state that Mr. Hurban was nominated Minister in the United States in 1936 by Dr. Beneš before he resigned the Presidency of Czechoslovakia in October, 1938.

As you doubtless know, a Czechoslovak Committee was established in Paris and was later transferred to London. It is common knowledge that this Committee has been recognised by the British Government in the course of the war as the Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia under the Presidency of Dr. Beneš. Our Government has taken note of the situation thus created and the relative facts in this connection are constantly under consideration.

Truly yours,
Cordell Hull.'

[5]This letter read as follows:

'London, June 4th, 1941.

Mr. President,

I hesitated somewhat before deciding to address this personal letter to you. Many things have happened since the last conversation which I had the honour to have with you just two years ago (on May 28th, 1939) and in which, when discussing with you the approaching war and the events which have now actually taken place, I told you about our intended plans for the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia.

My plans have now been realised. In agreement with our country, we have established a new Czechoslovak Army on British soil and we have organised our flying corps which for a full year has already been fighting together with the British airmen against German attacks on Great Britain. We have united our political emigration and

are in close co-operation with our country: with the political leaders of the Nation at home, with the intelligentsia and all classes of the Nation. We are marching in step with them and it is beyond doubt that the Nation is behind us. We have formed a Government and a whole governmental machine on British soil.

The British Government and all the British Dominions, after ascertaining these facts, have recognised us. At this moment we have agreed with Great Britain to raise our international status to one of full recognition *de jure*. We have also been recognised by a great number of other countries.

On May 28th, 1939, I had the honour of discussing with you the valuable aid which the Government of the United States gave to President T. G. Masaryk in his fight for the liberation of our Nation during the last war. Similar assistance given by the United States to my country in these hard times, after all that has happened to our Nation since Munich, its present sufferings and its really heroic resistance against the German invasion, would mean for us a quite inestimable service and encouragement, conferring upon the Nation at home an invincible moral and political strength.

By not recognising the occupation and destruction of Czechoslovakia in March, 1939, you, Mr. President, have performed a service to my country which our Nation will never be able to forget and which is a pillar of strength for us. But the fact that the U.S. Government has not yet thought it possible to recognise our Government resident in London is being misused by the Nazis in their efforts to suppress the resistance and the fight of our people for the restoration of freedom and democracy in our country, to weaken it morally and to destroy all its hopes for a better future. If on the other hand we were recognised by the United States, this would be a really far-reaching act in the struggle not only of Czechoslovakia but of all Central Europe against Nazi dictatorship. Our State and Nation were really democratic. Czechoslovakia was the only democracy which was able for fully twenty years to defend its happy and successful democratic freedom and but for the events of Munich our country would even now be one of the best European democracies. In the present war it is carrying on the same military and political fight, and it is in the same position, as present-day Poland, Norway and the Netherlands. I believe for these reasons that it deserves your confidence and that of your Government.

If the United States were to decide to do in our case the same as Great Britain has done, I believe their action would merely fulfil the spirit of your policy of aiding and saving freedom and the dignity of modern man, of saving democratic institutions in Europe and of removing from the political world that barbaric regime, today represented by Nazi dictatorship, which is destroying the small European Nations.

The Czechoslovak Minister in Washington, Mr. Vladimír Hurban, has already put our request before the State Department and he is continuing his negotiations. I myself have had the honour to contact your Ambassador in London, Mr. J. G. Winant, in this matter and I have given him all necessary information concerning it. But it seems that some difficulties still stand in the way of the recognition of our Government by the United States. I therefore beg you to forgive me, Mr. President, if, remembering again my visit with you in Hyde Park, your friendly reception and the sympathy which you then showed in the affairs of Czechoslovakia and its people, I again turn to you now after two years, when our cause has made such progress and our Nation at home has shown beyond doubt and uncompromisingly in which camp it stands, with a fresh request for your help.

If you are able to grant it, history will show that your help was not given to an unworthy recipient. Above all, you will be helping a Nation against which a great injustice has been committed and whose cause is just.

I wish all your undertakings real success. I thank you for all your sympathy and friendship to my country, and for every future enterprise in which your great and powerful country engages for the freedom of the oppressed European Nations and for democracy and world freedom.

Sincerely yours,
DR. EDUARD BENEŠ.'

[6]Negotiations for the recognition of the Czechoslovak Government by the U.S. Government were begun before full and definitive recognition *de jure* was granted by Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. The American answer was therefore addressed to the 'Provisional' Czechoslovak Government.

[7]The address read as follows:

'Mr. President, Members of the United States Senate, it is now a quarter of a century since Thomas G. Masaryk, the first President of the Czechoslovak Republic and my great predecessor, came, in the last year of the first World War, to Washington to inform American leaders how his Czechoslovak countrymen were fighting for their freedom and independence and to obtain the American support for their struggle. His Mission in the United States met with favour and encouragement everywhere. He found a great understanding of, and sympathy with, the national aspirations of the Czechoslovak people in the President of the United States, Woodrow Wilson, in his Government, and the people.

It was known that for centuries, beginning with the Middle Ages, this small Nation in the heart of Europe had been a glorious independent kingdom, the Kingdom of Bohemia—and a prosperous State—the State that first began the fight for religious freedom in Europe. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Prague, its capital, was a great centre of learning, contributed largely to European cultural, spiritual, and material development, and played an outstanding rôle in European history and particularly in the history of the Holy Roman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. Perhaps your Government knew, too, the famous declaration made by the German Chancellor Bismarck after his victory over Austria in 1866:

> 'Whoever is master in Bohemia is master of Europe. Europe must, therefore, never allow any nation except the Czechs to rule it, since that nation does not lust for domination. The boundaries of Bohemia are the safeguard of European security, and he who moves them will plunge Europe into misery.'

In my estimation, there can be no better comment on the position of my country even today. The recognition of our cause here in this country in 1918 was also undoubtedly due to the unmistakable determination of our people to live as a free and independent nation. More than 150,000 Czechoslovak soldiers fought for their country's liberation in the first World War in Russia, France, and Italy. When the war was drawing to a close, the epic march of the Czechoslovak legionaries across the Siberian plains to Vladivostok fired the imagination of the American people.

When the collapse of the Central Powers was imminent, Masaryk made our Declaration of Independence in Washington on October 18th, 1918. It was promptly accepted

and recognised by the American people and by their Government. That is why Czechoslovakia was considered and often called the god-child of the United States of America.

Czechoslovakia's 20 years' record as a free and independent democratic State is one of which we are justly proud. Surrounded on all sides by authoritarian countries and governments, she remained faithful to the democratic traditions which came to her very largely from the United States. Her social legislation and her educational system were progressive and advanced; her financial system was stable, her currency, one of the soundest in Europe; her general economic standard was very high, and her import and export trade greater than that of Italy. Until 1938 this Republic was one of the most prosperous and happy countries in Europe. Even the concentrated campaign of Nazi Germany, beginning in 1936, using corruption, lying propaganda, and threatening war and violence, failed to shake the inner harmony of the Czechoslovak Republic.

In her foreign policy Czechoslovakia resolutely and consistently followed the policy of peace, international arbitration and collective security. She fostered and encouraged friendship with her neighbours—Austria, Yugoslavia, Poland, and Rumania.* She was the most loyal member of the League of Nations. She supported the Locarno policy, was an original signatory of the Briand-Kellogg Pact, and was ready to play the part demanded of her in any generally accepted system of collective security. In Geneva she resolutely opposed the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and China; I was President of the Assembly of the League of Nations when we voted the sanctions against Italy upon her invasion of Abyssinia. Czechoslovakia was ready to oppose militarily the occupation of the Rhineland and Austria. Our Army and Air Force were ready and thoroughly efficient. Up to the year 1939 we did our duty completely, not only to our Nation, but to Europe and democracy as well.

Czechoslovakia was in mortal danger from the moment that Hitler and the Nazi leaders came to power.

When Hitler saw that the policy of sanctions against Italy was not strictly applied and when the German remilitarisation of the Rhineland was not opposed by force, he thought that the countless seeds of bitterness and mistrust sown by the dictators would permit him to reap a harvest of destruction in Europe and bring about the realisation of his pan-German plan. The success of the annexation of Austria in March led to the September crisis in 1938.

My own view then was that Hitler's demands and attacks against Czechoslovakia should have been rejected even at the cost of a war. We were ready, but the Western Powers were not. By the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, Europe and the world gained a year's time in which to prepare for the defence against the coming onslaught. In my opinion, the second World War began with the criminal occupation of Prague. And from the very day of occupation, March 15th, 1939, all Czechoslovak citizens have been at war with Germany.

Since 1938 the Czechoslovaks at home have endured great hardships, sorrows, and suffering. They know that many of their soldiers and airmen, who escaped from their enslaved homeland, lost their lives while fighting for its liberation in Poland and in France. They know that after the Franco-German armistice, Czechoslovak soldiers and airmen reassembled in Great Britain and that in the decisive battle of Britain, Czechoslovak airmen played an honourable part. They know, too, that Czechoslovak soldiers are now fighting in Russia and in Africa and manning the defences of Great Britain.

*Note the omission of Hungary (Tr.).

On the other hand, they see their own country being converted into an arsenal for a war against the United Nations. Many are now working as forced labourers in Germany and elsewhere. Those who resist the oppressors are either executed in masses or tortured in prisons and concentration camps. Their country is pillaged and germanised, their national education completely destroyed. The undying memory of the martyred village of Lidice forbids us ever to relax in the world struggle now waged against the powers of evil and darkness. The all-out participation—after Pearl Harbour—of the United States in this fight for the freedom of the world has turned into certainty what until then had been the hope of the ultimate liberation for the Czechoslovak people and the other occupied nations.

Mr. President, permit me to say before this august body, in conclusion, with gratitude and appreciation:

It was here in this great democratic country that in October, 1918, the freedom and new independence of my Nation were solemnly proclaimed and its first free Government recognised. When on March 15th, 1939, Nazi Germany destroyed the new Czechoslovak liberty, and I personally, as member of the faculty of the University of Chicago, respectfully asked President Roosevelt to refuse to recognise this insulting and lawless act of violence, it was the Government of the United States which first among all Great Powers categorically repudiated this wanton aggression. It gave its full approval to the refusal of the Czechoslovak Minister in Washington to hand over his Legation to the Nazi authorities. The Government of the United States never recognised the German occupation of the Czechoslovak Republic. By this decisive act this great historic land of freedom defended the national liberty of my country at the most tragic moment of our modern history. Later your Government recognised our reconstituted Government and independent country and accepted our Republic as a free and equal member of the United Nations. Through all these acts the immortal spirit of the great American tradition, of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, rose to defend the highest undying principles of human and national liberty at the time when a small, democratic, peace-and-freedom-loving Nation was assassinated by a vulgar authoritarian aggressor.

The entire Czechoslovak Nation expresses its warmest thanks and gratitude to the great American people, not only for all that they have done on behalf of Czechoslovakia but also for the enormous and outstanding contribution of your great country to the war effort of all the United Nations.

They do not doubt that this great struggle, in which the United States are playing so decisive a rôle, will end with one of the greatest victories in your and our national annals. They are greatly encouraged and proud that I have the privilege of addressing the Members of the Congress of the United States. I know that they will accept the promise I make to you, today, as theirs.

As President Masaryk in 1918, I, today, feel authorised to declare on behalf of my Nation, here in the Washington Capitol, that after the final victory in this great war is achieved, the Czechoslovak Nation will reconstruct its old home rapidly and successfully by its untiring efforts, remaining faithful—as it always was during the difficult period of its long, chequered, and glorious history—to the democratic way of life, to the principles of spiritual and religious freedom, to the ideals of peace and peaceful international collaboration, considering itself again the god-child of the great and glorious Republic of the United States.

[8]While I was in Washington, I sent to the Czechoslovak Government in London regular reports of the results of my visit. I quote here some of the reports which show how I saw things at that time. On May 13th, 19th and 30th and on June 7th, 1943, I cabled to our London Government some details of my discussions in Washington. They read as follows:

'For Minister Masaryk and the Government—Confidential.

I.

May 13th, 1943

I thank the Government cordially for their greetings. On the first day I had a discussion lasting five hours with Roosevelt in which we covered most of our political problems. The talks took place in a very cordial, friendly and frank atmosphere in the presence of Hurban and Smutný. My short résumé follows:

1. In regard to Russia the President's attitude is that it is necessary to trust Russia and also to continue to co-operate loyally and fully after the war. He wants to give practical expression to this by meeting Stalin soon and by discussing all questions with him quite frankly and realistically. For the time being please do not speak of this possibility.

2. Roosevelt also takes a realistic view of Polish-Soviet relations. At least he has succeeded in stopping any further polemics. But he is taking the right view of the difficulties on the Polish side and on the form of a solution of the Polish-Soviet frontier dispute.

3. He looks with sincere and friendly eyes at Czechoslovakia the full liberation and restoration of which as a State is to him self-evident.

4. He agrees that after the war the number of Germans in Czechoslovakia must be reduced by the transfer of as many as possible. He asked no questions about Slovakia.

5. I informed the President about my negotiations with the Soviets and of their and our point of view for the regulation of our mutual relations in the form of a treaty—also of their assurance that they do not intend to interfere in our internal affairs and of their readiness in principle to come to an agreement with democratic Poland also. The President took note of this with visible satisfaction and recognised that in our attitude to Russia we were proceeding on the right lines.

6. Roosevelt gladly accepted my memorandum for the Vatican (published in the Appendix) and will forward it with his recommendation.

7. In further conversations we discussed the question of post-war Germany, the question of general international control of the enemy countries and of the new international security organisation. The President's views on all these problems are very concrete. He tries to find a solution which will be as uncomplicated and at the same time as effective as possible, preserving the full liberty and independence of the component States. But he does not intend to go so far as the League of Nations did.

8. The whole of our talk about the organisation of security was within the framework of our discussions on this matter with Eden in London. The conversation though in general terms was nevertheless sufficiently concrete to make his whole conception clear to me. This was my first conversation with Roosevelt and it was successful from every point of view and favourable for our cause. Our reception and the whole proceedings were such as to give us every satisfaction.

BENEŠ.

II.

May 19th, 1943

(*a*) For the time being I have finished our discussions in Washington. Harry Hopkins visited me to confirm all the decisions reached in my conversations with Roosevelt and we discussed my future political contact with the President, who is especially interested in the regulation of the political and economic affairs in Europe at the moment of the fall of Germany, and everything that may directly or indirectly result therefrom.

(*b*) Though the visit to Cordell Hull at which Hurban was present, was a formal one (I thanked him for our reception in Washington), I discussed our problems again with him. Our main topic was Russia. Hull, like the others, is chiefly interested in getting guarantees that Russia will not interfere in their interior affairs and will not deliberately support communism and communistic programmes.

Hull, obviously on purpose, gave me a concrete example from his office of how after Munich he held up all decisions concerning matters arising from Munich, because, as he said, the Munich Agreement was actuated by the spirit of injustice, dishonour and dishonesty. For that reason, so far as the United States was concerned, all its effects on Czechoslovakia were null and void.

I thanked him for this statement and for the behaviour of the United States up to the present time and I declared that from our standpoint Munich did not exist and that legally we were, and would only stand for, the pre-Munich Republic, as had been expressly confirmed to us in our agreement with Russia.

The Washington talks surpassed all our expectations and we are satisfied with the understanding and really cordial reception which our cause received in all the circles with which I came in touch.

BENEŠ.

III.

May 30th, 1943

(*a*) Today I returned to Washington in accordance with an earlier arrangement and I had another long conversation with Sumner Welles in the presence of Hurban. Welles said that the President insisted that we should meet again—especially to discuss the Russian problems before my journey to Moscow. I am therefore leaving on Monday to attend a military review and see some factories and then I shall go straight to Canada. In consequence of Welles's request I shall then have to return once more to Washington for a last conversation with the President.

(*b*) The conversation with Welles was very important. We again discussed the question of general security and I learned how the organisation of a World Council will crystallize following the discussions here with Churchill and also the structure of the proposed regional councils and other forms of participation by the smaller Nations in the organisation of security. It seems that this is developing on the right lines.

(*c*) Welles confirmed to me how well the dissolution of the (Communist) International has been received here. He said it came just in time and that the reports of Davies from Moscow are quite favourable. It can be stated that the prospects of an agreement with Russia are certainly making good headway.

(*d*) We once more discussed the question of Germany and the arguments for and against partition. I stressed very strongly that if they should decide in favour of partition, the security system would really have to work because Czechoslovakia would

be the first to be endangered—as in 1938 after the annexation of Austria. They are aware of this. He asserted that Great Britain and, it seemed, Soviet Russia, too, were for the time being in favour of partition, adding that a definite solution would especially have to be found for the problem of Prussia.

(*e*) He again confirmed the American attitude concerning Poland and Russia. I called his attention to the necessity of preparing a solution in time so that in the end it would not come to a *military* solution between Poland and Russia. He stressed also that the treaty we intended to conclude with Russia could be regarded as proof that the independence of Poland, Rumania and other neighbours would also be respected and that in this way we would be emphasising that our policy was European not binding us to an exclusively Eastern or an exclusively Western policy. But he understood that we do not want another Munich. He confirmed that they fully appreciated our policy and that they had no objections to it. I stressed that we were anxious to see complete unity between the Great Powers as well as *to promote our uniform line towards Russia, Great Britain and the United States!* I think that our whole attitude has been made clear, that it is now understood here in detail and that so far as America is concerned there will be no difficulties. On the contrary they understand that by a similar clarification of our policy in the case of Russia we shall be helping all the others. As to what points it will be necessary to stress in Russia about the situation here, this matter will be discussed in my final conversation with the President.

BENEŠ.

IV.

June 7th, 1943

Today I had my final farewell conversation with Roosevelt in the presence of Hurban. The conversation covered the whole ground of our former talks and again confirmed all the discussions and views exchanged earlier.

The following individual questions were discussed:

(*a*) Roosevelt requests that in my conversations with Stalin in Moscow I should present his views in the matter of the Baltic States. The United States are not able and do not intend to hinder their final annexation to the Soviet Union, but must respect world public opinion and therefore it is a question of finding the form and procedure which will calm public opinion. In the matter of Poland he considers Sikorski to be the best Prime Minister but he does not know what will happen among the Poles themselves. He knows that even Stalin would not personally reject Sikorski. He expects that the final solution will be the Curzon line somewhat modified in Poland's favour and the incorporation of East Prussia in Poland. He considers this a just and right compensation which the Poles could and should accept.

(*b*) He agrees to the transfer of the minority populations from Eastern Prussia, Transylvania and Czechoslovakia. *I asked again expressly whether the United States would agree to the transfer of our Germans. He declared plainly that they would.* I repeated that Great Britain and the Soviets had already given us *their views to the same effect.*

(*c*) As for Germany, he rather inclined to partition into five or six States. He was satisfied with the visit of Davies to the Soviet Union adding that a further rapprochement has been reached and that matters were developing on the right lines. About the dissolution of the Comintern he said that he accepted it in good faith. Now, he said, it depends on the Soviets.

(*d*) He is in favour of the establishment of free ports in the Northern Adriatic. He named Trieste, Fiume and Pola.

(*e*) He spoke very decidedly in favour of the system of as free international trade as possible as proposed in the Cordell Hull plan of reciprocal trade agreements.

(*f*) While speaking of Russia, I again stressed that we had agreed with Russia about our future relations and I repeated the essential parts of the agreement to him. He confirmed our former discussion and again took note of, and agreed with, my intention to conclude all the agreements on occasion of my next journey to Russia. I promised to inform him of the result. He also asked for reports about Poland.

(*g*) On the subject of the organisation of security, Roosevelt said that he was a realist differing in this respect from Wilson. He wants to secure peace for fifty years and leave the rest to posterity. Differing from Churchill, he does not want a *European* Council but a single central World Council with effective power.

(*h*) I thanked Roosevelt again very much for my reception in Washington, for our conversations, for the generally favourable attitude to Czechoslovakia and for the help the United States have given us in the past and during my present visit.

BENEŠ.'

CHAPTER VI

THE WESTERN POWERS ANNUL MUNICH

1. *Negotiations with Great Britain about the Revocation of Munich*

NEVER—not even when the situation looked its worst—did I believe that the Munich dictate would be a basis of lasting peace or of a lasting legal status for Central Europe. Invariably, my doubts concerned only the duration of that fearful and immoral political injustice. I was afraid only of what would happen to our Nation if the dictate should last even a few years in what purported to be peace.

I feared for the morale of the Nation if this should happen. Fascists and Nazis, political adventurers, cynics and immoral political schemers, so-called political realists and advocates of the immoral policy of having a number of irons in the fire, uneducated political opportunists—unscrupulous class egotists—all our political and spiritual reactionaries could have claimed to be in the right as opposed to the political conceptions and political morality of Masaryk and myself! And the Nation as a whole would have suffered an alarming retrogression politically, economically, socially and morally and its injuries would remain for decades, if not for centuries.

I repeat: I did not believe that this would actually happen. But that it should not do so necessitated, as always in politics, fighting against the possibility at once, with resolution and indefatigably. Equally, I never doubted that Munich *was not the end of a great crisis* but the *beginning*. Nazi Germany needed Munich to begin its expansion in earnest. The egotistic and (in all that concerned us) unscrupulous tendencies ruling in the Western democracies, either did not, or did not want to, understand this.

Feeling sure that I was right, I expected—as I always stress—war. Immediately after Munich therefore I started my preparations to attain our political objectives: to annul the Munich dictate, to restore the Republic, to obtain redress for the injustice done to us, *to secure political and moral satisfaction*. From September, 1938, sleeping and waking, I was continuously thinking of this objective—living for it, suffering on its account and working for it in every one of my political actions. In fact, it was already my only aim in life.

My determination was so much the stronger because before even six months had passed Germany itself destroyed Munich. Both the democratic

guaranteeing Powers, on the most specious excuses, evaded—for a second time—the solemn obligations they had undertaken at Munich: namely, to defend the international existence of the truncated Czechoslovakia. This new act of German gangsterism culminated after another six months in the attack on Poland. Thus even the final and principal excuse for Munich—the preservation of world peace—which carried with it the fictitious justification for demanding sacrifices from Czechoslovakia (namely that it should give so-called liberty to its minorities) lost all validity or sense. The whole policy which led to Munich was brought to the height of absurdity, was demonstrated to be wholly impracticable and fundamentally wrong while all those who (whether they believed in it or not) initiated and sponsored it were shown to be altogether credulous, entirely frivolous and manifestly ridiculous.

Objectively, therefore, the conditions for the annulment of the Munich dictate and all its consequences had already existed for a long while.

Subjectively, however, this was not the case. All the western politicians who prepared and executed the Munich dictate were still in power when the war began and they remained in power for a long time afterwards—some even throughout the war. For three whole years the war took an adverse course for the Allies and the self-evident axiom of politics and diplomacy—not to assume obligations prematurely when one is not sure that it will be possible to honour them—was applicable to all these people, particularly in a case which would have meant disavowing their own actions and condemning both themselves and their former political achievements.

The fact that Munich was so intimately bound up with internal policy in France and Great Britain was another strong argument for postponing the reversal of that wrongful act. The obscurity of the relations of the Western Powers with the Soviet Union, against which the Munich dictate was as clear an offence as against Czechoslovakia, caused the ruling circles of the Western democratic Powers to proceed in this case, too, with caution and sometimes even negatively.

This was why the fight for the public and binding annulment of the Munich dictate was so extremely difficult even though revocation had been greatly facilitated both legally and politically by Germany's war policy and though the legality of Munich had indeed been destroyed, deliberately and cynically, by Berlin. For an incredibly long time the curse of the evil deed continued to operate in London, in Paris and elsewhere. Nevertheless, I began the fight as a private person immediately after my arrival in Great Britain and later in America. The occupation of Prague on

March 15th, 1939, gave me the first opportunity to take public action and to begin to advocate the principle of the legal continuity of the First Republic. The war waged by Germany against Poland, France and Great Britain enabled us to declare this to be the cardinal principle of our policy.

I made the first concrete attempt to secure a public declaration in this sense by Great Britain on the second anniversary of Munich in 1940. This was after our Provisional Government had already been recognised by Great Britain—at the moment when our Army which had arrived from France, was re-organising in England and when our airmen were already taking part over the Channel in the Battle of Britain. In recognising the Provisional Government, the British Government had informed us not that it was recognising *any of our frontiers, but simply that it had no obligations whatsoever in regard to frontiers in Central Europe.* This did not satisfy us and I asked for a clearer declaration, specifically in respect of Munich.

I discussed the matter with the representative of the British Government to the Provisional Czechoslovak Government, Bruce Lockhart. I urged that the British Government should take the opportunity offered by the second anniversary of the Munich dictate to make a solemn pronouncement to the Czechoslovak people, as to one of the Allies, declaring the Munich dictate to be invalid. The Foreign Office agreed to my request in principle and discussed with me the contents of the address which was to be made in the Czechoslovak broadcast from London either by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, or by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, himself.

I gave Lockhart my draft about Munich in which two essential facts were stated, namely that the Munich agreement was legally non-existent:

(*a*) because the Czechoslovak Government had been forced to accept it under special pressure and according to Czechoslovak law the Czechoslovak Constitution had been forcibly violated;

(*b*) because the agreement had been destroyed when Germany invaded Czechoslovakia by force on March 15th, 1939.

The Foreign Office only accepted the second point for inclusion in the official address refusing—in 1940—to admit publicly British participation in the pressure of the four Great Powers on Czechoslovakia in September, 1938, and publicly accepting a share in the guilt of Munich. As I have already mentioned the address was then delivered by Winston Churchill on September 30th.

In view of the fact that the address made no mention of our frontiers some of our people in the emigration and also in the Government sharply criticised it as insufficient and even held that it sounded as though Churchill

had accepted the Munich dictate. The Foreign Office therefore confirmed to me by meams of another official letter from Bruce Lockhart *that Churchill's address expressed the view that the Munich treaty had been cancelled, that in so far as frontier problems arose from this fact the British Government did not intend to bind itself in advance to recognise or support in the future any frontiers in Central Europe including, of course, the so-called Munich frontiers.*[1]

All these negotiations showed me very clearly how difficult it would be even at a later stage to get from the Foreign Office a categorical and clear repudiation of Munich involving a definite revocation of the whole Munich policy with all its consequences. Nevertheless, these negotiations were our first great success as they ended with the recognition of two great facts of essential importance for us:

(*a*) The British Government declared that it did not feel legally bound by the Munich Agreement.

(*b*) It did not recognise the Munich frontiers but regarded the question of *all* Central European frontiers as open.

Thus was stated what had ceased to exist. It was not yet stated what did or would exist.

I was therefore anxious that the next discussions should take us a step further and that there should be set out positively what actually existed or would take the place of the Munich dictate after victory had been won. I tried to obtain a positive declaration on this point in the summer of the following year when the change of the recognition of our Government into a full and definite one was being discussed and when, at the same time, we successfully asked and obtained that Czechoslovakia, in respect of international law, should be put on the same footing as all other Allied Governments residing at that time in London. I then asked that this equalisation should also *cover recognition of the legal continuity of the First Republic.* From this, would have implicitly followed *the recognition of the full 'status quo ante'* and therefore also the recognition of our pre-Munich frontiers.

Though the Foreign Office accepted the principle of the full international legal and political equality of Czechoslovakia with the other States, it requested that the question of legal continuity—and therewith all its consequences—should be postponed on the ground that this was too complicated a problem which would have to be studied further in detail in all its legal aspects and consequences.

As we did not want to postpone our definite recognition with the important political advantages arising from it, we accepted provisionally

the Foreign Office's view but immediately started to prepare another move for the final liquidation of the Munich dictate. I began more intensive discussions on the manner and form of this liquidation in the autumn of 1941 after the full recognition of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic by Great Britain, and after the arrival of Heydrich in Prague on September 27th, 1941, and the first wave of massacres in Bohemia and Moravia. I showed how the annulment of Munich would, so to speak, morally strengthen our people in their valiant resistance against Germany and what a blow this step would strike against Nazi power in our country.

In my letter of April 18th, 1941, which I sent to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden through Lockhart (and to which I personally drew the attention of Prime Minister Winston Churchill when he visited the Czechoslovak Brigade in Leamington on April 19th, 1941), I summed up Czechoslovakia's legal attitude to the unworthy act concluded at Munich without our participation and to our great harm. My memorandum mentioned the principles of a declaration by which Munich would be definitely expunged as between Czechoslovakia and Great Britain.

From the beginning of 1942 I discussed this question with the British Minister Nichols who had been accredited with the Czechoslovak Government shortly before* and who helped in drafting a formula for the British revocation of Munich. The exchange of views was rather protracted. I imposed the greatest patience on myself and put forward proposals for the British text *which meant the legal status quo ante* and therefore did not infringe the British principle of not binding the Government in the matter of the frontiers of the different countries waging war before the war actually ended. The text was several times corrected or adapted by me to meet the objections of the Foreign Office. All my proposals contained these main principles:

(*a*) In view of the fact that the Munich Treaty of September 29th, 1938, was arbitrarily violated by the German Government on March 15th, 1939, by the occupation of Czechoslovak territory, it was thereby destroyed;

(*b*) In view of the fact that the Munich Treaty itself was forced on the Czechoslovak Government by pressure, it was therefore, from the Czechoslovak point of view, unconstitutional and illegal;

(*c*) The British Government to declare that they were not in any way bound by this treaty or by its consequences;

*Full legal recognition of the Czechoslovak Government involved an exchange of full-time accredited envoys. Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart as permanent Under-Secretary had other duties (Tr.).

(*d*) The British Government to regard the pre-Munich status of Czechoslovakia in international law as having been restored.

But all these 'integral' formulas about Munich—this is how my proposals were described in official British circles—always came up against insurmountable opposition in the Foreign Office.

My unvarying arguments that this alone would wash away the whole matter from the mind and memory of our people; that this alone would fully clear up the situation and really repair all the injustices done to us; that our sufferings gave us a right to such a declaration and that the whole course of the war had fully justified our pre-Munich policy and our behaviour during the Munich crisis—all this was not enough.

The chief reasons given officially by the Foreign Office against such an 'integral' condemnation of Munich were broadly speaking as follows:

(*a*) The formula proposed by Czechoslovakia means that we now make a definitive pronouncement in regard to the post-war frontiers of Czechoslovakia. We cannot do so, firstly, because all other States whose frontier problems are equally controversial (even though there is no Munich in their case) would ask for the same treatment; secondly, we are under an obligation to the United States not to make such a declaration before the end of the war and before joint negotiations have taken place at the peace conference. As a result of the war, *all* frontier problems of all States have substantially been reopened in one respect or another and therefore we cannot bind ourselves today unilaterally with respect to Czechoslovakia only;

(*b*) A declaration that the Munich Agreement has ceased to exist does not annul the historical and legal fact that such an Agreement was concluded and, according to British legal theory, such a historical and legal fact does not cease to exist as a result of a unilateral British declaration but only by a new international agreement or treaty in which those who concluded the original Munich treaty participate in some form or other. For this reason the invalidity of the Agreement as between Czechoslovakia and Great Britain must be proclaimed by a 'less integral' formula.

(*c*) However, our pressure to obtain recognition of the legal continuity of the First Republic induced the Foreign Office to concede that it respected our point of view as a strictly *Czechoslovak* point of view and had no objections to it. But it asked us for the time being not to urge the British Government to give international approval to our attitude.

We replied to the above arguments that we were ready to accept that the Peace Conference should occupy itself with our frontier problems to the same extent as with those of other States. I myself added that we ourselves would—perhaps—after a victorious war make new proposals and new frontier demands and might therefore ask for some small rectifications in our favour. We also rejected the second British argument on the ground that it involved a fact which for us was unacceptable: namely that the Churchill-Eden Government still advocated the preservation of part of Chamberlain's Munich.

These arguments did not change the point of view of the Foreign Office. The discussions were sometimes very lively and stubborn. But they were carried on with complete confidence and full loyalty on both sides. In particular, I refrained from putting the whole question before the British public, the press and Parliament thereby evoking an internal party-political British quarrel though some of our more uncompromising friends urged me to do so.

But I always had the impression that the real obstacle to the acceptance of my 'integral' formula and to striking at the roots of the matter by a complete disavowal of the whole British foreign policy since 1932 was the fact that there still remained in the Churchill Cabinet a number of persons who had pursued this policy and who had supported Munich in 1938 from conviction, that such a step would have been a great public rebuke for the prestige and reputation of the whole former foreign policy of Great Britain, and especially of the Foreign Office, and this could have its effect on the internal situation and give rise to quarrels, discussions in Parliament, etc., which in time of war would have very disagreeable consequences. Of a certain importance was also Churchill's very honourable, quite personal conception of the loyalty which he owed to his personal collaborators and former ministerial colleagues.

In short: After my discussions which went on for a number of months, first, very secretly between myself and Bruce Lockhart, Minister Nichols and Foreign Secretary Eden, and later from the spring of 1942 with the participation of Minister Masaryk and Minister Ripka, we reached the conclusion that the British Government (including the War Cabinet whose approval was needed for such an agreement between ourselves and the British Empire) would in no circumstances go beyond a certain point. At the same time we realised that the Foreign Office would do its utmost to postpone for as long as possible the solution of this question which for the Foreign Office was surely most delicate.

2. *Great Britain Revokes Munich*

At that stage the Soviet Union indirectly helped us to the final solution of Munich as between ourselves and the British Government. During the winter of 1942* the Soviet Union and Great Britain began to discuss a closer agreement and the conclusion of a new treaty of alliance which would remove mutual distrust and doubts concerning the future course of the war and future peace. We took part in this work—very intensively and so far as we were able—being anxious that this agreement should at all costs be reached. We were vitally interested and the signature of such an agreement would have provided a fresh confirmation of the policy for which we had striven so hard and so long before Munich. If it had existed then, there would have been no Munich and no second World War. Finally the matter matured, the agreement was ready and in May, 1942, Foreign Minister Molotov came to London to put the finishing touches to the treaty and to sign it.

I had a long talk with him in London on June 9th, 1942. We agreed on the lines of our common war policy and I obtained from him a declaration that the Soviet Union had recognised the Republic in its pre-Munich frontiers and that it never had recognised nor would it recognise what had happened at Munich and after Munich. *I also obtained Molotov's consent to my officially announcing this to our people at home and to the international public as a binding obligation.*

On June 4th, Foreign Secretary Eden invited me to the Foreign Office to inform me confidentially of the contents of the British-Soviet Pact. He thanked me on that occasion for our help in realising this policy. We discussed a number of other questions and finally we came to our unfinished discussion about the British liquidation of Munich. At the end I said to Eden quite frankly: 'It is time to liquidate Munich as between Great Britain and us. Our discussions are prolonging themselves indefinitely and they are beginning to have a bad influence on our mutual relations.'

Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden entirely agreed. He promised that he would look into the matter himself and that we would settle it as soon as possible. New discussions followed on June 25th and July 7th, 1942, the first in the presence of Minister Nichols, and on our side of Minister Ripka. At the second Minister Masaryk who had meanwhile returned from the United States was also present.

In the first conversation we discussed the British-Soviet Pact and its

*i.e. 1941–2 (Tr.).

consequences, my talk with Molotov and our negotiations with the Poles and Polish-Soviet relations. Eden especially wanted to know whether we and Molotov had concluded any detailed agreements about Munich, what had been decided about our future relations, about the Poles and our common frontier with the latter and whether we and the Russians had linked our London talks with our own discussions with the British Government about the liquidation of Munich. On the last point, I assured him that nothing of the kind had happened and that Czechoslovakia wanted to regulate its Munich problem loyally with the different States directly, separately and without pressure. We also intended to do this with France in due course.

In the discussion which followed, Eden brought forward British proposals for a compromise on the basis of which, he said, a final agreement for the liquidation of Munich could be reached and in which these basic principles would be recognised:

(*a*) The Munich Treaty does not exist because it has been violated by Germany itself.

(*b*) The British Government therefore recognise nothing concerning Czechoslovakia contained in the Munich Treaty nor do they recognise anything that has happened since 1938 in respect of the original Czechoslovak frontiers as a consequence of Munich.

(*c*) The British Government undertake that in future international discussions, and in particular during the peace negotiations, they will do nothing that may be influenced, in any way, by the events of 1938.

Elaborating this clause, all the British representatives participating in the talks confirmed to us officially and expressly that this meant the same as what my integral formula demanded because Great Britain wished Czechoslovakia to be as strong, as consolidated and as secure as possible. It was substantially a return to our former natural frontier. What we would have to talk about later, formally, during the general and final peace negotiations would be the detailed frontiers in connection with the wider regulation of our German and Hungarian questions.

(*d*) Further it is proposed to omit any reference to the question of the legal continuity of our State from the discussions about Munich. *The British fully respect our point of view as being the Czechoslovak point of view* to which the British Government have no objections.

(*e*) With regard to the discussions which had also been in progress since 1941 about the British reservation, made at the time of the recognition of our Provisional Government and our State organisation in 1940, namely that the legal competence of our authorities on British soil

was not to extend to some categories of our citizens—those individual Germans and Hungarians from the occupied territories who did not join us—the British Government now proposed a new formula whereby we should nominate representatives of these categories of citizens to our State Council. The British Government would then drop this reservation.

(f) At the same time Minister Nichols informed us that the British Government had given careful consideration to our attitude *in the matter of the transfer from our Republic of minority populations which had conspired against us* and had reached the conclusion, in view of what had happened in 1938 and during the war, that at the time of the final solution of our minority problems after the victorious end of the war the British Government *did not intend to oppose the principle of transfer of the minority population from Czechoslovakia in an endeavour to make Czechoslovakia as homogeneous a country as possible from the standpoint of nationality.*[9]

In this form the discussions about Munich received the character of a great and far-reaching political negotiation about the future. From the beginning of April, 1942, when I submitted my last draft formula, to the end of July, 1942, these discussions were uninterrupted, systematic, strenuous and sometimes very animated. But they were always friendly and conducted in a spirit of mutual understanding. Extreme patience and self-control were necessary on both sides, and especially also, I would say, political wisdom and foresight in view of the difficulties which again and again arose in and for Great Britain, internally and externally, and the bitter memories conjured up for us all by Munich—including myself.

After this decisive discussion with Eden, I considered the British proposals in detail and I also examined the question whether we should continue the discussions or bring them to an end by accepting these proposals. After consulting Prime Minister Jan Šrámek and Minister Ripka we finally decided to omit the question of legal continuity from our demands and to accept the British view which fully respected our own Czechoslovak view. But we rejected categorically the proposal to connect the question of our jurisdiction in Great Britain with the nomination of German members to the State Council and with the question of Munich. We then informed Foreign Secretary Eden that we were prepared to accept the British proposal in principle but that we would first like to see the precise wording of the whole formula and assess its real political content. Mr. Eden suggested that we should meet again on July 7th when

he would hand us the draft of his final proposals on Munich, adding that he hoped that after all our previous discussions we would be able to accept it.

The formula put before us on July 7th contained the three points mentioned above, omitted the reference to legal continuity and retained the clause about recognition of our jurisdiction over all our citizens in Great Britain as soon as we accepted their representatives in the State Council.

We reserved our final answer until we had had another consultation among ourselves about the proposed British text. But we asked Mr. Eden at once and emphatically—Ministers Jan Masaryk and H. Ripka were present—to exclude the clause about the jurisdiction over our Germans and their membership in the State Council from this fundamental question and to omit it from the Note concerning Munich. During the two days which followed, we informed Minister Nichols that we accepted Eden's text in principle and we agreed on the next steps to be taken:

(*a*) The declaration would be delivered in the form of a diplomatic Note from Foreign Secretary Eden to Minister Masaryk.

(*b*) Minister Masaryk would acknowledge receipt of the British Note at the same time clearly stating that we had not changed our integral point of view and that in regard to Munich we were determined to persevere in the policy we had announced in our diplomatic Note sent to all Allied Governments on the occasion of our declarations of war against Japan, Hungary, Rumania and Finland after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour and after the United States of America had entered the second World War.[2]

(*c*) Foreign Secretary Eden would speak in Parliament about our whole discussions on the liquidation of Munich and would issue the text of both Notes to Parliament.

Thus ended these important and memorable negotiations.

In further discussions with Minister Nichols, the British Government's standpoint regarding our principle of the legal continuity of the Republic and of the attitude to the transfer of the German population was again confirmed. The decision of the British Cabinet, that it had no objection to the Czechoslovak principle of the transfer of our Germans, was shortly afterwards communicated to us by Minister Nichols.

On August 5th, 1942, Mr. Eden made the speech in the House of Commons on which we had agreed. The relevant parts of the speech read as follows:

'I am glad to have this opportunity to inform the House that I have today exchanged notes with the Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs in which I stated that His Majesty's Government's policy in regard to Czechoslovakia was guided by the formal act of recognition of the Czechoslovak Government by His Majesty's Government in July, 1941, and by the statement of the Prime Minister in September, 1940, that the Munich Agreement had been destroyed by the Germans. I added that as Germany had deliberately destroyed arrangements concerning Czechoslovakia reached in 1938, His Majesty's Government regarded themselves as free from any engagements in this respect and that, at the final settlement of Czechoslovak frontiers to be reached at the end of the war, His Majesty's Government would not be influenced by any changes effected in and since 1938.

'In his reply Monsieur Masaryk informed me that the Czechoslovak Government accepted my note as a practical solution of the questions and difficulties of vital importance to Czechoslovakia which emerged between our two countries as a consequence of Munich Agreement, while maintaining their political and juridical position with regard to that agreement and to the events which followed it.

'The text of this exchange of Notes is being laid as a White Paper.

'I should not like to let this occasion pass without paying tribute on behalf of His Majesty's Government to the tenacious and courageous stand which the Czechoslovak people are making against their ruthless German oppressors. Acts such as the destruction of Lidice have stirred the conscience of the civilised world and will not be forgotten when the time comes to settle accounts with their perpetrators.'

This was the last act of the Munich tragedy so far as the British Government and the British Parliament had participated in it.

In the whole struggle to annul Munich we proceeded without fuss. The British looked upon the matter with mixed feelings. Many of them did not hesitate to show me what they felt in a frank and manly way. The British Parliament dismissed the whole matter quickly either not having the desire or not taking the trouble to go into the question at length. Even in August, 1942, the Churchill Government still contained some members who had directly participated in the Munich policy and in Munich itself and the Parliament which now took note of the end of Munich was the same Parliament which had welcomed Chamberlain when he returned from Munich with his scrap of paper signed by Hitler and promised a lasting peace for both countries . . .

What reflections, what moral essays and ironical comments on political morality, on the march of events and on historic justice could be added! Perhaps it will be best if I simply quote instead extracts from what I said on August 8th, 1942, over the B.B.C. in my address to our people in Czechoslovakia about this final chapter of our struggle against Munich:

'Almost from the very moment when Butcher Heydrich stepped on to our Prague soil and began his bloody work; from the moment when for the first time the so-called Prague Government allowed itself to be driven into attacking us here and me personally as traitors and denouncing us solemnly; from the moment when the treacherous so-called Slovak Government declared war on the Soviet Union and later on Great Britain and the United States thus committing the outraged Slovak people completely to the bloody service of the Berlin Nazi Government—those same Slovaks who today are almost the only Slav race fighting against all its Slav brothers; at the moment when the Hungarian Government paid the Germans a second time for its booty in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia by sending a military expedition into the Ukrainian plains and when the representatives of a large part of our Czechoslovak Germans, led by the infamous Frank, raged at their worst in Prague, Brno and other Czech towns, basely killing our patriots who remained true to the independence and indivisibility of our Republic—it was at this moment that we here prepared for the last diplomatic action which still had to be negotiated after the preceding successes of our liberation activity, *after the recognition of the Government and of the independence of the Republic: namely the erasure from recent history of the event which actually introduced this fearful war: the Munich Agreement and all its consequences.*

'We conducted these negotiations objectively and confidently, without fuss, without unnecessary excitement and propaganda and in the spirit of friendship and alliance, in the spirit of co-operation during and after the war—with Great Britain as well as with the Soviet Union. Even at this date these negotiations have not been without difficulties. These questions are so far-reaching not only for us but for everybody and they will be decisive for a number of Central European problems after the war. We do not hesitate to tell you about these difficulties . . . The negotiations too were not without difficulty because Munich was an event which had such far-reaching consequences for Europe and the whole world. *As I have repeatedly emphasized it was with Munich that World War II began and since that time Czechoslovakia has been at war . . .*

'I do not conceal from you, my friends, that the discussions with

Mr. Molotov as well as those with Minister Eden and everything I have just mentioned, have been a great satisfaction to us all and to me as President of the sorely tried Republic. I have been so closely connected personally with what happened before Munich, at Munich and afterwards, and I lived through it all so painfully, that my efforts together with those of my friends and helpers to annul Munich and its consequences have for the last four years perhaps constituted the only aim of my life. Munich and everything connected with it was a great affliction and humiliation for the Nation. Today we have as compensation the full appreciation of the world. And the raising of the British and Soviet Legations to the rank of Embassies at the moment when Munich has been annulled, at least symbolizes the *moral appreciation* which is coming to you—the Czechoslovak people—for your sufferings.

'Furthermore, I know today as an absolute certainty, that we shall win this war and that the gains registered in the negotiations we have just concluded with the Soviet Union and Great Britain will be realised. I therefore regard this diplomatic task which I had set to our whole liberation movement and to myself, as having been substantially fulfilled.'[4]

3. *The Transfer of the Germans from Czechoslovakia*

It was clear to me immediately after Munich that when the annulment of Munich and of its consequences came in question in the future *the problem of State minorities* and especially the problem of our Germans would also have to be solved radically and finally. Innumerable times and full of grief I considered the problem of our Germans and its meaning and importance for the existence of our State and Nation. Already at the time of my legal studies in Paris and Dijon in the years 1905–1908 my first literary effort was devoted to this problem.[5] During the struggles and discussions in the first World War I considered it afresh and I discussed it many times with T. G. Masaryk.

After our liberation in 1918, not a day passed without my discussing it with Masaryk, without my coming up against it and without my being brought into painful contact with it during Masaryk's and my fights against Dr. Kramář, the National Democrats and Agrarians. Especially as Minister for Foreign Affairs, I had for decades perhaps greater trouble with this problem than with the whole of our internal policy. How many explanations and admonitions had to be administered to our politicians and parties to try to get them to look at these problems from a broader international point of view! How many campaigns of propaganda and

information had to be undertaken in friendly and hostile countries! How many extremely exhausting struggles there were at Geneva so that we might stand before the world as a mature Nation and State educated in matters of world policy! In the main, we succeeded!

When Germany entered the League of Nations in 1926 and shortly afterwards joined forces first with the Hungarians and then with the Italians for a comprehensive campaign to use national minorities as a weapon in the political fight against all its neighbours (ourselves of course included) I had to examine this whole problem in its wider aspects and I had to ask myself repeatedly: how long will we be able to hold out? *Our State was born with this problem and must either solve it at whatever cost or succumb!* In the thirties when there came first aggressive Fascism and then the even more aggressive Nazism and Hitlerism, this truth could be overlooked only by those who politically speaking were deaf and blind. There were enough of these in our midst!

This was why Masaryk as President of the Republic dedicated so much effort to these problems and why I as Minister and then as President never lost sight of them and shepherded them gradually to their solution. Often and intentionally I even put minority problems before the solution of social questions because I saw clearly that it was via these problems *that the first and foremost attack would be launched against our independence and existence and against our State as a whole.*

Our efforts in this direction are all known and I will not occupy myself with them here though I shall examine them again in detail in my book dealing with the Munich crisis. Munich posed the problem of the minorities especially of our Germans in so categorical a manner that nobody could be in any doubt about it. Munich also showed with complete clarity that what was in question was the fate of our State and of our very existence.

When I went abroad in October, 1938, I therefore put to myself once again that fateful question: When Munich is liquidated after a new dreadful crisis and a European war how can we solve our nationality problem once and for all and as far as possible justly? As always, I told myself that in solving such a difficult problem I must above all find the right method for tackling it: make myself acquainted with the procedure and political tactics to which I would have to adhere consistently and unchangeably from the very beginning of our struggle to its conclusion. *At the same time or even earlier I must decide what the fundamental solution of the problem was to be and this would have to remain our unchangeable aim both during the new war and after it.* But it would always be necessary to adapt oneself also to the

general political developments and the march of time including the course of the war itself.

Guided by these considerations, I decided above all in favour of the *continuity of pre-war policy*. I interpreted this as meaning that the solution of our nationality problem would have to start, as far as possible, from our historical and local conditions; that it would have to be governed by absolute goodwill and loyalty to all our partners and that it would have to be linked to our stand at the time of the fight at Munich when we went to the furthest limit of possibilities and compromises. At the same time, however, our political procedure must actually enable the solution which we had chosen and were supporting *to be applied generally, on a European scale, and that therefore it must be a solution which would be acceptable to all in the new post-war conditions in the European States all of which would assuredly undergo great and revolutionary social changes after this new catastrophe*. This meant that the solution of our nationality problem would have to be systematically tied to social and economic changes. *That is to say, the national revolution must be merged with the social-economic one.*

In other words: in the nationality problems there would also have to be *progress—real progress both from the human and evolutionary point of view*. This meant in practice that it would be necessary to convince the British, French, Americans and Russians—and, if possible, also the Germans themselves—that in order to preserve pre-Munich Czechoslovakia it would be necessary to adopt the principle of a very radical reduction in the number of its minorities. It would also be necessary to convince the Czechoslovaks that *they, too, would have to make some sacrifices in pursuit of this aim.*

This political objective to which I held consistently throughout the war was pursued as the progress of the war demanded—before and at the beginning of the war cautiously and with moderation, more decidedly and more fundamentally as the war proceeded. It was adapted to fit in with the social and economic changes which the war necessarily evoked in the structure of the newly-created post-war society. *But it was fundamentally influenced by the brutal behaviour of the Germans towards our Nation at home and it was proclaimed uncompromisingly to all parties concerned without making any differentiation between great and small. It was also resolutely and consistently applied to all of us at home and, naturally, our whole struggle for the liquidation of Munich was based on it. We were all convinced that the immediate fate of the Nation was intimately bound up with this question.*

Whenever international difficulties stood in the way of the acceptance of our thesis, I always resolutely and with a full sense of responsibility asked the question which always made everyone pause : *Do you want to*

prepare a new Munich. Throughout the war the European consequences of Munich were really so fully understood everywhere that this question silenced everybody.

When I saw that we were likely to reach a satisfactory solution of the Munich problem with the British, I was even more convinced of the correctness of my considered and resolute attitude in the matter of nationalities. But I felt that absolute unanimity was essential in regard to those questions in our Czech and Slovak emigration abroad, between us and our people at home and between us and our Germans in so far as they were represented in the emigration: that is to say, the German Communists and Social Democrats first and eventually the others too. I decided not to hide anything from anybody—though these were very delicate diplomatic questions—but to put the whole matter openly to everyone especially our Germans and to try to reach complete agreement with them in advance. In this issue too, 'Fair play'* was my political principle.

It was thus that I began my discussions with the German Social Democrats—in practice, with Deputy Wenzel Jaksch and his associates. I discussed the matter frequently with the group of German Communists (Deputy Karel Kreibich)† as well and then with the Zinner-Lenk-Kirpalová group. Jaksch came to see me for the first time at Putney as early as August 3rd, 1939, soon after my return to London from the United States. He told me of his own grievous hardships, of the annoyances and difficulties which beset him when with British help he left Czechoslovakia and he described to me the situation in Germany, in Austria and, of course, also among the members of his party in Bohemia.

He estimated that among the German emigrants from Bohemia in Great Britain, 50 per cent were for Greater Germany and 50 per cent for the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia in the old pre-Munich frontiers. He said that the Social Democrats émigrés from the Reich and from Austria and their policies were exercising strong influence on our Germans. But among the Germans themselves, those from the Reich and from Austria, there was a similar controversy. Both camps were counting on war coming soon but one of them expected the speedy defeat of the Third Reich and at best the re-establishment of Weimar Germany while the other, especially the Austrian Social Democrats, foresaw a vast Greater German revolution and were planning the reorganisation of Europe accordingly—that is to say by applying all Greater German aims.

Jaksch said that in this hot-headed atmosphere our Germans were in a

*In English in the original (Tr.).

†Appointed Czechoslovak Ambassador in Moscow in 1950 and afterwards purged (Tr.).

difficult position. If their leaders could at least put before their émigrés some constructive Czech programme for the federalisation of Czechoslovakia in which there was a special territory for the Sudeten Germans (not less than in the so-called Fourth Plan which I had offered to Henlein) then, perhaps, Jaksch and his comrades could support this solution and work in the emigration for the acceptance of this plan as a final agreement between Czechs and Germans. The latter could, of course, not again accept a dictate from our side because none of them would accept the sort of situation which had existed in the pre-Munich Republic.

I listened to Jaksch's views which were patently based on the plans of the other Germans, which shared their great hopes and counted on a quick tempo in the war and on a vast political revolution by all German workers. In regard to our purely Czech matters, Jaksch at that time was reserved. Therefore I maintained reserve too and did not tell him about my plans. I merely asked him to remain in contact with me so that we could exchange views as the situation developed especially as soon as war started. I simply rejected his proposals and pointed out that we would never again return to the old theories and ideas more especially not to bilingual districts or regions. We 'emigrants', of course, were all expecting war.

After the war had started and after my return from France, Jaksch visited me again (December 4th, 1939). He again complained how difficult it would be for his Party to decide the future fate of the Bohemian Germans. He asked me whether the leaders of our emigration could meet and discuss the whole situation with our Germans. Events, he said, would move fast and we could be taken by surprise by a premature peace. I myself thought a meeting with the Germans would be premature and I did not agree to it. But I suggested to him that they themselves should discuss the whole situation of Germany, Austria and themselves and formulate their future political programme accordingly—and that they should then submit it to us.

By that time I knew that Jaksch at the very beginning of the war had already elaborated an extensive programme of Greater Germany—that is to say, a programme covering Germany and the whole of Central Europe —that he had pushed it in British political circles, especially in the Labour Party, and that in it he had already envisaged not only the Bohemian Germans as an independent unit not connected with us, but also had put the whole of Czechoslovakia into a special Central European federation in which there would be a German preponderance.[8] I therefore decided to wait realising that objective and reasonable discussions with our Germans would only be possible when the course of the war had brought home to

them the position of the whole of Germany, how the world viewed this position and how our Germans were themselves inevitably involved in this situation.

Moreover, I had already received very detailed reports about how matters were developing at home in the 'Protectorate' including what had happened in Prague on October 28th*—and on November 17th in regard to our students and our universities†; also in the wider field: how our people were being treated, our politicians, our common people, our political parties, our clubs, our whole cultural life, how many of our people were already in concentration camps, etc., etc.

My expectations were fulfilled. Six more months of war taught us and our Germans much although this period was filled with great German victories against Poland and France. Jaksch came to see me again immediately after the recognition of our Provisional Government in London. This was on July 4th, 1940, when the question of our recognition was still secret and the whole political world was still occupied with the defeat of France and speculating about what would happen next.

But Jaksch surprised me by declaring, quite rightly, that for the time being a discussion of the fate of our Germans was impossible, that he was no longer occupying himself with such questions and that the paramount question was really to defeat Hitler. Therefore, for the time being, he did not ask me for a programme for the future or for any declaration about our Germans. He simply declared unconditionally his solidarity with our cause and said that he was ready to co-operate with us wherever co-operation was possible. I think that at the time this declaration was sincere.

I therefore decided to tell him more about our plans. I informed him that in a short while our Provisional Government would be set up and recognised by the British Government but that the situation was not yet sufficiently mature to enable us to agree with our Germans upon a positive or final solution of their problem. The Germans therefore would not immediately be in the Government but we were establishing at the same time a quasi-Parliament—the State Council—in which our whole emigration was to be represented and I intended to invite our Germans to enter it and then to start political discussions with them. After that, it was our desire to solve all their political problems in stages in accordance with the way the situation developed. *We were decidedly and in principle in favour of*

*Czechoslovak Independence Day, attempts to celebrate which had been ruthlessly suppressed.

†The Germans closed all the Czech Universities—a step which was followed by riots in which several Czech students were killed (Tr.).

co-operation with our anti-Fascist Germans. But, of course, we could not solve all these problems connected with this co-operation without the British. After all, we had in the first place to deal with *the liquidation of Munich*, a matter which closely concerned our Germans. Furthermore, it would be necessary to reach agreement with the Nation at home. 'We do not want to do all this without your participation and we therefore welcome what you have said today'—I concluded.

This statement made a very great impression on Jaksch. Intensive propaganda was being carried on at that time among our German émigrés and often very fantastic ideas and reports were circulating among them. Many of them were in principle against all compromise with us and continued to believe in the Greater Germany' programme. Others watched our actions attentively, especially in the military sphere, criticised it sharply and drew from the strong anti-German feeling among our soldiers very critical inferences about us and our movement in general. For a long time therefore there were no conversations between us on fundamental issues. Moreover, some of the British with whom Jaksch had been in contact had given him the impression that no important development could take place in our affairs without an agreement with our Germans.

On September 22nd, 1941, Jaksch came again. That was after the Soviet Union had entered the war against Germany and after our final recognition by Great Britain and the Soviet Union. I was therefore already able to speak more plainly and definitively.

I told him in particular what the attitude was at home towards our Germans and I did not hide from him the extremely uncompromising mood in our country under the impact of the brutal way the Germans had behaved to all the Czechs. I read out dispatches from home showing how our people were planning to solve the German problem. Nevertheless, I said, I regarded our really democratic Germans as equal partners and I asked for a clear declaration on their side—without reservations or conditions—proclaiming their loyalty to our Government-in-exile and to the Republic in its historic pre-Munich frontiers. I further told him that though I was in favour of the nomination of German representatives to the State Council, this would have to be postponed for the time being in view of the situation at home (and in accordance with the express wishes of our people in the homeland) and that meanwhile Jaksch's party and we should proceed on parallel lines. I said further that we should not force our German citizens in Great Britain to enter our Army and that the punishment of war criminals from the ranks of our Germans at home would be carried out within the framework of general retribution after this great

war exactly the same principles as the punishment of Czech and Slovak war criminals. I added that I would soon have a further opportunity of discussing and clearing up all these questions with him and his friends and that I hoped we would reach agreement both about principles and about procedure.

I asked Jaksch and the other representatives of our Germans to come to tea on January 7th, 1942, for a general exchange of views about the war as a whole and our affairs in particular. I told them on that occasion that I expected the final defeat of Germany some time in 1943—at that time I, too, was somewhat over-optimistic about the progress of the war—and that it was necessary to make preparations accordingly. We should all be ready—not only ourselves but also the people at home. *We must of course expect great and revolutionary social changes* which would mean at the same time great changes in our nationality problems too.

I asked them to realise that immense and permanent changes had taken place in consequence of the behaviour of the Germans and of their regime: the plundering and looting (cultural as well as material) throughout the country, the widespread terror, etc. I said: '*Until now nothing similar has ever happened in the whole history of our country and the memory of it will never fade from our midst.* Such things cannot, and will not, be without grave consequences.' I called their attention to the fact that radical nationalism was growing daily at home because of the dreadful and unimaginable terror in the concentration camps where probably hundreds of thousands of our people were suffering and where tens of thousands of our people were dying.* The Protectorate as a whole is nothing more than one vast torture chamber the horrors of which could not be described. This had evoked in our people a dreadful longing for revenge. Their minimum demands included *not only a great and revolutionary act of retribution at the end of the war* in the course of which many people were prepared to rid our country by force of all our Germans in Bohemia and Moravia without distinctions or exceptions and to consummate *our final separation from the Germans, their transfer to the Reich. In a word: the end !*

I went on: 'I do not indeed believe that this bloody and extreme course will be adopted. I know our people and I know also that they are not so bloodthirsty as that. But the leaders of our German emigration must so

*The official Czechoslovak estimates of material losses due to the German occupation were Kčs 900,000,000,000 (£4,500,000,000 at Kčs 200=£1). The number of persons killed by the Germans was estimated at 38,000 while 200,000 (the majority being Jews) did not return from the German concentration camps. No information is available as to how these figures were computed (Tr.).

much the more take account of the fact *that the plans for the readjustment of our post-war internal relations which they submitted to me at the beginning of the war* and which they are still discussing in their publications *will not and cannot be realised either.* I have been considering all these matters very carefully, I have examined and compared the various plans for a solution of these problems and the least common multiple at which I have arrived is *that in the social revolution which will certainly come it will be necessary to rid our country of all the German bourgeoisie, the pan-German intelligentsia and those workers who have gone over to Fascism.* That would be a final solution and, so far as we were concerned, the only possible solution which we would be able to implement, *namely the coupling of our social revolution with the national one.'*

I added to Jaksch and his friends: 'We must have the courage to speak about this openly. And especially you Social Democrats must have the courage to do so. This plan even contains an element of marxism and marxist dialectics in the revolutionary process which must inevitably accompany the changes in the social structure of the Nation as an outcome of this great and world-wide catastrophe. After the first World War, I wrote a book about the nature of the Czechoslovak national revolution and in it I foretold that the German nationalist bourgeoisie in our country would sometime in the future attempt a counter-revolution and that there would be no peace between us until this bourgeoisie was forced to undergo a similar revolution to that the Czechs had to undergo in former centuries. Now, after the second World War, this revolution is inevitable. And the whole nationalities problem in our country will be radically solved at the same time'.

I invited my guests to give careful consideration to these ideas so that they should understand that they would be the apostles of this ideological transformation of the Germans, joining forces also for this purpose with the German Communists. I explained my whole plan to them quite frankly. I did not wish to, and did not, hide anything from them. If any of them entered the State Council, they would necessarily have to know what plans and discussions they would encounter there. Of course, I should have to conclude the negotiations with the British about Munich and our frontiers. I expected that they would be ended within a few months. I told them frankly about this, too—that I was also discussing this matter with the Allies and that I was sure of bringing the negotiations to a successful conclusion.

I invited Jaksch to luncheon the following day, January 8th, 1942, to finish our discussions. (Ernst) Paul, Jaksch's friend who had organised the

Social Democratic 'Rote Wehr' in our country during the struggle against the Henleinites was also present. He had come to London from Sweden. After lunch we went over the whole ground again. I saw that since the previous day Jaksch had considered my views and *that his reaction was clearly negative*. He did not say so expressly but his attitude was clear to me from his behaviour and that of his friend. Neither of them wanted to hear of such a combination of social and national revolution. They regarded the Germans in our country as a unit and did not consider themselves to be the representatives of the workers only but of the Germans as a whole. Perhaps at that time they did not clearly realise that by so doing they automatically took full responsibility for what the Germans were doing to us as a Nation in the war . . .

From that time we met less often. We had another, longer, conversation on May 29th, 1942, in which Jaksch expressly admitted the two principal mistakes he had made in exile: '*I expected the war would be short and I counted on a German revolution*', he told me. 'I did not expect either the first or the second,' I replied. 'In particular I did not believe that the German working class would stage a revolution against Hitlerism and for a victory of the Soviet Union over Germany. As in 1918 this will only happen at the moment Nazism collapses and the object will also be the same as in 1918: to try to save Germany with its whole Nazi bourgeoisie from the worst. In Germany this will mean dreadful chaos for a long while.'

Even at the beginning of 1943, Wenzel Jaksch was still waiting for some miracle which would prevent the complete collapse of Germany and thus save the Sudeten-Germans as well. I was not astonished nor did I reproach him as a German for his attitude. It was more than natural in existing conditions in Germany and in the German Nation as well as among the so-called Sudeten-Germans. *These, too, were political errors on Jaksch's part equally with his idea that he who was obviously a Social Democrat was not simply a representative of a section of the anti-Fascist German workers in our country but of all the Germans in general—that is to say also of the more than 80 per cent of our Germans who had gone over to Hitlerism and who, during the war, were always ready to do anything they could to help destroy our Czech people.*

My last personal talks with Jaksch (who was accompanied by his associates De Witte, Reitzner, Wiener and Katz) were on September 17th and 25th, October 2nd and December 1st, 1942, when the revocation of Munich had been publicly announced in the British Parliament in August, 1942, and when our point of view and our whole thesis had finally prevailed. Our conversations were more or less in the nature of reminiscences about all our former political problems. I stressed that Munich and the

question of our Germans were to be regarded as finally solved; that it was now only a question of reducing to a minimum the number of Germans who were to remain in our country; but that in this question I was urging, and would continue to urge, an attitude of *compromise and humanity*, especially with regard to the real anti-Fascist Germans.

A short time before Jaksch had likewise received a statement on this subject from the Foreign Office. *Personally I never wished that decent Germans who had fought as brothers on our side for democracy and had remained true to democracy should be forced into a tragic situation.* But at the same time I frankly told Jaksch and his associates that I would like to see the words 'sudetendeutsch' and 'Sudetengebiet' (region) vanish from Czechoslovakia definitely and permanently and also that the political and wrongly-interpreted German concept of 'Selbstbestimmungsrecht' (self-determination) should disappear too. Politically speaking it had led our Germans astray and had completely prevented us from building our State after the first World War. Moreover, neither Masaryk nor I had accepted it in the sense in which the Germans were using it. We said this to Lansing, Wilson's Secretary of State, very firmly at the peace conference in 1919.

During the final conversation De Witte pathetically described the dreadful situation in which the Bohemian Germans now found themselves. In a phrase, it was: 'If Hitler wins the war, we Socialist Germans are lost and if the Czechs win it, we are lost too.'

I answered: 'Yes, I recognise your tragic situation and I am deeply grieved about it. But such things happen to Nations through the fault of their leaders and by the chain of historical events. That is why I am opposing and always will oppose the claims of some of our people for exaggerated rectifications of our pre-Munich frontiers in respect of a defeated Germany after the war. And that was why I made those superhuman efforts during Munich for a real agreement with our Germans and with Germany as a whole.'

'But in what a situation have we been since 1938? Never forget what efforts I made for an agreement with you during the struggle over Munich! But what did Hitler prepare for us—and with him more than 80 per cent of your German co-nationals in Bohemia and Moravia, the representatives of whom you claim to be today? In what have we been guilty? Only consider what we have had to go through since 1938 and how we fought for democracy and peace! And our people at home are still suffering dreadfully. What are Hitler and the Germans doing in the Czech countries today and every day? The world will only come to learn about this when the war is over.

'From this, my dear friends, we can draw but one calm, but stern conclusion: *A just retribution for all direct and indirect, active and passive war criminals as a lesson for the future and—complete separation !* Otherwise after this dreadful war, *an unheard of massacre will ensue between our two races !* We can and must prevent this *by our complete separation !* Only in this way will we be able to meet again later—when the present sufferings are forgotten—as neighbours and live each in his new home without bitterness and in peace, separated, *side by side* with one another.

'In that connection I shall never forget that you, the true German Social Democrats from Bohemia and Moravia, have never sullied the German name during this great historical crisis and that you bear no guilt in the dreadful fate of the German Nation. Furthermore, the Germans will certainly not be destroyed as a Nation in this great struggle. They will live on—since 1938, it has not been so sure that we Czechs would do so ! We shall still learn more about that subject after the war. In any case perhaps your fate and that of the Germans as a whole *will contribute to the future moral and political democratic rebirth of Germany.*'

Our last meeting with Jaksch in exile was on December 1st, 1942. On that occasion, I gave him my written statement in answer to the declaration of the national conference of the Sudeten-German Social Democrat Party held in Great Britain in October, 1942. The Party was in regular operation in England with its whole organisation. It took decisions regularly and forwarded them to me if they concerned matters of principle. In some cases I answered them. In some ways, our correspondence was of importance, especially Jaksch's letter of January 3rd, 1941, the resolutions of the German Social Democrat Party of September 28th, 1941, and October 4th, 1942, and most of all the Party's resolution of June 7th, 1942, with Jaksch's letter of June 22nd, 1942, together with my reply which took the form of a declaration of principle in regard to the June resolution. I handed this to Jaksch in our Embassy in London on December 1st, 1942. Especially in this declaration and in my letter of January 10th, 1943, are summed up the fundamental principles of the problem of our former* Germans and of the minority question in general.[8]

In this chapter I have set forth the general conclusions I reached during the war about the question of our minorities and the solution of the problem of our Germans. They were natural conclusions valid for our Hungarians and Poles as well and I tried to apply them consistently to these minorities, too.

*This is the first occasion on which Dr. Beneš speaks of the Germans of Bohemia and Moravia as though they were no longer included in Czechoslovakia. (Tr.).

I also advocated this solution in all talks with the British, Americans, Russians and French. In their case, I started from the general principle accepted during the war by all Great Powers, namely, *that there would be no repetition of the attempt which was made after the first World War to apply the minority treaties with the help of the League of Nations because they had not stood the test of practical experience and had been most disappointing. In 1938 our country—how absurd it was—had been brought to Munich by means of these treaties !** So there was no other course open but to try to reduce the number of minorities in foreign States by transfers of population—to be carried out, as far as possible, universally, decently and humanely—and either to assimilate the remaining fractions of minority populations on a reasonable basis or to give them the free choice of emigrating voluntarily wherever they wished to go.

Though this would mean a grave and long drawn-out crisis for the persons actually involved, it would nevertheless provide *a better and more humane solution than fresh inhuman massacres in the post-war period through outbreaks of civil war and brutal vengeance causing the continuation of nationality struggles for centuries* thus frustrating again and again the social and economic progress of mankind. Moreover, the transfer could be closely controlled and co-ordinated and could be carried out under decent and humane conditions.[9]

Such a solution was also and especially suitable for our Hungarians and we mobilised all our efforts to win over all the Allies to this policy and to secure by this means *final reconciliation and post-war co-operation between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, too.* During our discussions in London with the Poles for a definite Polish-Czechoslovak settlement in the years 1940–1942 we made the same proposals.

After the negotiations with the British Government, I also discussed the question of the transfer of our minorities in detail with Moscow, through Ambassador Bogomolov, in the spring of 1943 before my visit to Washington, when I was also negotiating the text of our future treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union. Moscow gave its consent in principle to transfer by a declaration of Ambassador Bogomolov, which was handed to Dr. Ripka on June 5th, 1943. At the request of Bogomolov, Dr. Ripka cabled it to me in Washington on June 6th[10] and I then discussed it immediately with President Roosevelt.

*The minority treaties, in the drafting of which Dr. Beneš played a leading part, gave minorities a right to arraign the majority Government of the country in which they lived, before the League of Nations. They were thus an admirable weapon for would-be trouble-makers. Dr. Beneš's views on this subject are summarised in my book, *Beneš of Czechoslovakia*, p. 163 sqq. (Tr.).

Having therefore obtained the views of London and Moscow I submitted this question at once to President Roosevelt. He gave me his personal approval on the spot and added that *what had caused such a world catastrophe as Munich must be completely removed once and for all.* And when I arrived in Moscow at the end of 1943 I discussed the whole problem again, this time with Stalin and Molotov personally. I also gave them a written memorandum on this question. Both again confirmed the attitude which Moscow had already announced to me before. The practical aspects of the whole question of our Germans were afterwards dealt with at the Potsdam Conference of the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain in July, 1945, when the transfer of the Germans from our country was internationally approved. It was carried out by us to its conclusion in 1945 and 1946 under the leadership and full and permanent control of the United States of America.

A great and fateful chapter in our national history, one which had so often moulded our whole destiny—and which at least twice might have caused the destruction of our Nation—was thus finally closed.

An unexpected outcome, this, of the Munich policy !

Postcript to the story of the Transfer of the Czechoslovak Germans.

Speech by Deputy Hans Krebs* before he was sentenced to death by the People's Court on January 15th, 1947:

'Honourable Court! This is the last speech of a former German deputy addressed to the Czechoslovak public and this honourable People's Court.

'Today we stand before you as defendants and you are our judges. In this moment a full thousand years of a common, hard, but also great, historic period are closing. The Czech Nation will now, at the last, live alone in its national State, which not only in name, but also in fact is really becoming a national State.

'Three million Germans have been transferred. This is the greatest transfer since the migration of nations, perhaps even the greatest in the history of the world. Nearly one-third of the population of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia have left or are leaving their old homes. They are leaving behind their homes, what they once called their property, their past and their dead. They are leaving the work of millions and the work of many centuries, never to return. It is hard for anybody who has not gone through it to measure the moral and spiritual burden we are bearing now. I believe that the Czech Nation will appreciate it, either

*A witness of Hitler's will (Tr.).

now or later, the Czech Nation whose magical song has often moved our hearts too—your "Kde domov muj" (Where is my country). I know that you will feel with us, you who are always singing with so much emotion ". . . and that is the beautiful country, the Czech country, my homeland."*

'I, too, have loved that country fervently and I am entitled to say that because I can prove that my family has been in this country since 1558. I think I may say: We fought for our Nation in good faith. We have been deceived but nobody can dispute our good faith. I always believed that the Czechs and Germans could establish a common State like Switzerland, each in his canton, in his autonomy. This did not happen. History decided otherwise. Before you, stand the rest of our parliamentary representatives, once more than seventy deputies and senators, today fifteen men, and you are to judge them. Think also when you do so of the greatness of the occasion.

'From this time, you will have no more nationality disputes in your country. I only wish that the great sacrifice we are making may not be without profit, but that from them there may at last be born a peaceful fellowship between us—which, alas, we did not succeed in establishing in one State—namely, the fellowship of the German State and the Czech State which will again be neighbours in the future.

'And so the question with which I ended the introduction to my book *Struggle in Bohemia*: "When will there be peace in this country?" has been answered—in a different way, of course. But I hope and pray it has been answered not only for the present but also for the future. Then even the personal sacrifices which we have to make will not have been in vain.

'Honourable Court! Convict me if you think that this is necessary in order that your laws may be observed and that it is necessary for peace and for the future. But convict me for faults that I really committed, not for what I never did and never wanted to do. The Public Prosecutor at the end of his comprehensive speech has declared: *Nothing may be forgotten and may never be forgotten!* But we cry out on parting: May the separation of Germans and Czechs finally bring peace to both! May the sufferings of our time end our sufferings for all time! Only so will all these immeasurable sacrifices have any meaning which we Sudeten Germans must now make and which the Czechs also have had to make in so great a measure. They will have served the highest ideal of mankind—a lasting and honourable peace.'

*From Smetana's Má vlast (My country) (Tr.).

I comment on this:

Alas! This profession of faith and confession are too late. Our whole struggle at the time of Munich proved more than clearly who was sincere and whose good faith cannot and must not be questioned. During the culminating and fatal struggle of the second World War in which the life of our Nation was literally at stake,* our Germans did not show good faith in any particular.[11] *Such will be the final judgment of world history on this subject.*

Prof. Reinhold Trautmann! 'The Way of One Nation.'

From the *Leipziger Zeitung* of January 17th, 1947.

Professor Trautmann lived for a long time in Czechoslovakia before becoming Professor of Slavonic Studies at Leipzig University. (The Editor.)

I would first like to dispose of the easily-made objection: that I am inhumane.

Everybody who despite the terrors of war and post-war conditions has preserved his soundness of judgment knows that for the overwhelming majority of people the permanent loss of the home is a source of lasting, often unbearable suffering and hardships, be it as now the very roots of our existence in the country of our birth, or the accustomed professions which we have often inherited in the places where we spent our youth or our deep inner ties with our ancestors and relatives. All this I know very well. I would also like to point out that it is the sublime duty of other cultured Nations to prevent as far as they can, the sad and tragic transfers of peoples by making war impossible. I do not expect that those who are concerned personally will be able to consider their fate quietly and without passion. This would be superhuman. So much the more it is the task of others to examine the truth clearly and prosaically.

It is incontrovertible that for the future of the new Europe the transfer of the German population is something healing and a blessing. In particular looking back over the last 35 years (I went to the German University in Prague in October, 1911, and I worked there until 1921) I regard it as irrefutable that the real consolidation of Czechoslovakia was impossible while it was under the influence of the German element—at least of the overwhelming majority of the Sudeten Germans.

During the winter of 1918-1919 the Czechs re-established their State in exemplary order and on exemplary lines. If there were any mistakes they

*During the war, the German Government at one time seriously considered a project to uproot the whole Czech Nation and resettle it in the Ukraine (Tr.).

were not worth mentioning especially if we measure them with what happened under Hitler. German schools and universities remained. German civil servants were taken over without re-examination. But the Czechs had to pay heavily for their moderation and tolerance towards a quite unarmed Nation.

For twenty years, beginning with 1918, the Sudeten Germans were losing ground. They could not bear not being still the governing class. They did not want to admit—they even ignored conceitedly, short-sightedly and retrogressively the fact that the Czechs and Slovaks had already outgrown the Austrian—I would rather say: the German—cane, that they had matured culturally in the latter part of the long reign of Francis Joseph and that they had become independent. The value of the Slav share in the national economy and administration and in cultural life was not recognised. On the contrary, the majority rejected it in blind self-conceit: Such is the palpable, inexcusable, grave, perhaps even tragic, failure and guilt of the majority of the German population.

There were (and still are) exceptions. There were for instance the Prague Germans, sobered by Jews in high positions who rightly understood their part as mediators between two efficient Nations. There was the group of German farmers whose most striking representative, Franz Spina, in the end fully assimilated Czech culture. There were the members of the two Socialist Parties who stood side-by-side with the Czechs in the fight against Hitler . . . But over the majority there lay a thick veil of blindness and approaching disaster.

It was Hitler's lot to precipitate this catastrophe and bring it to a climax. It was at his instigation that there began the stormy development which no Czech could have anticipated not even in his wildest dreams and which was worth all sacrifices: the establishment of a purely Slav State.

It is not my object to write an obituary notice for the German Nation in Czechoslovakia. It would have to be very long, comprising seven centuries and there would be many famous pages in it.

That there is a positive side to the contribution of the Germans in Czechoslovakia no calmly thinking Czech would contest. But every Czech would have to point out, and rightly, that the positive traits became beneficent only when his own vitality and intelligence had permeated it and that he had to win both these qualities from the dragon's mouth. In reality, the struggle with the Czechs has already lasted many centuries and already about the year 1300 expressions of Czech national consciousness are on record. In the fourteenth century a very valuable Czech prose and verse literature originated in Prague. The prose reached European stan-

dards and importance with Jan Hus and Petr Chelčický. Under the Hussites, Czech national consciousness was embodied in a mighty movement which emanated not only from religious ideals but also from strong social and national impulses. But all that the Czechs won from the Germans during the fifteenth and sixteenth century in honest and hard fight, they lost again after the catastrophe of the White Mountain on November 8th, 1620. Germanisation and catholicisation worked so strongly that in the eighteenth century it was possible to doubt whether the Czech Nation existed because the 'nation' then meant only the nobility and bourgeoisie. Finally, about 1800, there began what is called the Czech renaissance, long unnoticed, uncomprehended and unrecognised by the Germans.

Now the Czechs and Slovaks have matured and by the verdict of history, against which there is no appeal to a higher court, their beautiful country has become their own property. Their diligence and industry, their meditative intelligence, ability and dexterity, their burning thirst for knowledge, for civilisation and all its gifts and, last but not least, their profound and strong national consciousness must open the way to an important future for them in Central Europe.

All this means for Europe that great obstacles which hid many dangers have been removed by a hard but necessary operation. We Germans recognise these developments as final and will enter into relations with this excellent and very gifted Slav Nation on a new spiritual and political basis.

Let the adversary and victor of yesterday contribute in the coming years to the healing of the scar. In a free, self-confident and really democratic Europe the opportunity will surely present itself.

4. *France also Revokes the Munich Outrage*

After settling the matter of Munich with the British Government, we considered how and when we should liquidate Munich *vis-à-vis* France. The problem of Munich hung round our necks like a millstone throughout the war and, let us confess it, this millstone hangs in our memories even today and will continue to lie there for a very long while. In the history of European politics the policy of appeasement which was practised by the Governments of the individual Great Powers with such calculating cold-bloodedness in regard to the small States will always be a great and terrifying example of political egotism *which will for ever be a classical one.* That it was also a policy of incredible political levity, inexperience and criminal ignorance on the part of the Western Powers—and of criminal

gangsterism on the part of the Germans, is simply another aspect of this sad period in European history. The Nuremberg Trials and all that transpired at them about German preparations to destroy the existence of Czechoslovakia are a more than eloquent testimony to the whole tenor of the Munich Agreement.

Czechoslovakia was the last and most characteristic victim of this policy —a victim in regard to whom it was no longer possible to bring forward excuses or arguments and justifications. The well-known British cartoonist, David Low, put it very well: his cartoon showed President Beneš on the operating table with Hitler and Mussolini hacking off his limbs while Chamberlain and Daladier held him so that he could not move. That was the policy of appeasement with an obvious commentary on the responsibility for its execution in Munich. The fact that France and Great Britain did feel guilty; the fact that nearly every Englishman with whom any of us talked about Munich during the war felt guilty and ashamed forced us to be tactful and decent in our procedure, to speak about the matter as little as possible, not to revert to it unnecessarily, not to make reproaches or incriminations. Above all, not to forget even in times which for us were bad, how both Powers, especially France, had really helped us to achieve our first liberation during the first World War! And this is the way we must go on behaving even in the future.

Now that we were allies and friends again, both countries—especially France—had to pay so heavily for Munich and, whether they wanted to or not, they also had to fight for the annulment of Munich and for our liberation whereas we—through their fault—could not participate in the fight as effectively as we would have liked so that we contributed comparatively smaller sacrifices during this period.

While the war lasted, our special position often brought us into difficult psychological situations. Naturally there was on all sides a tendency to push Munich to one side, to forget Munich, to act as though there never was a Munich. *But, of course, there was and is, and will be . . . It will stand for ever as a warning to future generations!*

This situation will persist for a long while. On one occasion, I spoke about it to some Frenchmen. They themselves started the conversation. They wanted to know my feelings about Munich, towards them, towards France. I told them that the first need was that both Governments, the British and the French, should liquidate Munich already during the war —also that this should be done as quickly as possible and without leaving any legal or political odds and ends. The second essential would be to help us regain our full liberation and to annul Munich also in this way. The

crime of Munich must not, and would not be, misused by us against anybody, but *we had a right to full restitution.* And finally, somewhere in the future, the question would arise of a—perhaps formal—declaration, manifestation or solemn pronouncement from one nation to another or between our Parliaments and peoples—I did not yet know if it would be convenient. But it would be necessary that this event, which for us was so dreadful, should be forgotten and *pass from politics to the realm of history* so that it would no longer touch our sentiments and we could talk of it in the future calmly as of a single, bad, isolated moment of the past. In that way we would be able to think chiefly of what France had done for us in the war of 1914–1918.

Will this be possible? I hope and believe it will. Great Britain has already done so much in this direction during the second World War that it would be wrong not to recognise this fully. Of course we must never forget the lesson Munich teaches for our future national and State policy. And both France and Great Britain, too, cannot and must not forget it.

It was on this basis that I had worked for redress with Eden from the beginning of 1942. I now reflected what to do in the case of France. My view was that Munich should be annulled quickly, without unnecessary public acts but simply as a matter of course and without emphasising our satisfaction. In short: *in a dignified and manly way and without much fuss.* Such a method corresponded to the situation and to the whole character of this act as well as to the war situation as it existed at that time.

I therefore decided to liquidate the matter with France on these lines at once—at least in principle. Unlike other people I immediately saw in Charles de Gaulle after the fall of France the man who would play an important part in the military renovation of France and who would, at least for some time, be the mouthpiece of post-war France. After Pétain's treason and after the fall of the Third Republic he was the first to raise his voice and to continue the fight against Hitler. *He symbolised Fighting France.* Such a stand will never be forgotten. It is incorporated in the Nation's history.

De Gaulle visited me in my suburban London home soon after his first broadcast address to France on August 8th, 1940. He explained to me his attitude towards Vichy, and the Pétain Government, to the war and to France's future tasks. He at once told me plainly what he thought of the France of 1938 and of Munich. We agreed easily. We said that we would remain in contact, would support one another and would unostentatiously renew the former co-operation between our two countries, because we were both equally convinced of the final defeat of Hitler. Shortly after-

wards I returned his visit and we once more confirmed our standpoints.

When he established his 'National Committee of Fighting France' and when he succeeded in bringing under its rule whole great territories in the French Colonies, I did not hesitate to tell him that we would regard this Committee as really representing France and as her Provisional Government without regard to what others would do. Afterwards, when he tried to obtain full recognition of his Committee as the Government of the French Republic and the admission of France as an equal into the ranks of the Allied countries and Governments fighting against Germany, he came into conflict with Great Britain and America. I considered the negative attitude of the Western Powers towards France to be a mistake and I showed them that I thought so tactfully but unmistakably. I regulated the policy of our movement accordingly.

I did not agree with those who thought that France had gone under for a long period, that it had perhaps already lost its former position for ever, and that it was already necessary now, during the war, to act on this assumption. I agreed that the collapse was a terrible one though not permanent. On the other hand, I did not exclude the possibility that though the process of regeneration in France would be difficult, perhaps even—as others thought—long, it would not take place in such a condition of weakness as some feared and others sometimes even hoped.

My policy towards defeated France was after all simple. It was in the interests of Czechoslovakia—and of Europe—that a new and strong France should be reconstructed again as soon as possible in the West of the European Continent. Otherwise the new peace and the post-war political order of Europe would again be built on the wrong lines. For this reason Czechoslovakia would work for the quick reconstruction of France and would contribute to it wherever possible. What France did to us in 1938 should stimulate us to repay evil with good, to ask nothing for doing so and to expect nothing, simply remembering gratefully what France did for us in the first World War. What conclusions France itself would draw was its affair and what the future relations between our two Nations would be concerned primarily the French people and ourselves. The attitude of our Nation towards France had always been, was and always would be quite clear and unambiguous.

It was in this spirit that our whole policy towards France was conducted during the second World War. In this spirit I also wanted to liquidate at once with de Gaulle the whole problem of the Munich policy. And in this spirit this was finally done . . .

On August 6th, 1942, after Eden's speech about Munich in the British

Parliament, I asked the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs in De Gaulle's National Committee, Maurice Dejean, to come to see me (Dejean afterwards became the first French Ambassador in liberated Prague). I again assured him that I considered the French National Committee to represent the real France and I declared that now the British Government had liquidated Munich the French should do the same.

At the time of Munich, Dejean had been an official of the French Embassy in Berlin where he had watched and experienced the complete penury of the French policy and diplomacy at that time. He had never agreed with Bonnet's policy. He had always remained loyal to our former common front and he had joined De Gaulle's revolt immediately after the capitulation in June, 1940. He was one of the few French diplomats who remained faithful to Fighting France. He fully agreed with me and he added his own reasons for embracing this policy and for carrying it out.

In answer to his question, I confirmed that he could officially tell De Gaulle—who at the moment was out of London—what I had told him.

On August 24th Dejean presented himself again and came to see me at Aston Abbots. He told me that De Gaulle agreed with my views and plans and had authorised Dejean to discuss all these problems with us. De Gaulle also approved of our deciding jointly as to whether the liquidation of Munich should be effected in the form of a treaty, a declaration or an exchange of letters as in the case of Great Britain.

I discussed the various possibilities with Dejean at once. I told him what I thought the liquidation documents should contain and finally asked him to discuss the technical details with Minister Masaryk and Minister Ripka. In the end it was agreed that the liquidation should be carried out by an exchange of letters which would be signed by De Gaulle and by Dejean as Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. On our side, the signatories would be the Premier, Dr. Šrámek, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk.

In the following weeks, Masaryk, Ripka and Dejean discussed the wording of the two letters. Dejean brought a draft of the French text which Masaryk and Ripka regarded as incomplete and Dr. Ripka therefore made a new draft. To this new draft and to the amendments made by the French I added my own remarks. Ultimately, on September 23rd, Dejean and Ripka agreed in principle about the wording of the Notes which were solemnly signed and exchanged in the office of Premier Šrámek on the day of the fourth anniversary of the signing of the fateful Munich Agreement.

De Gaulle's letter read as follows:

'Mr. Prime Minister,

I have the honour to inform the Czechoslovak Government that the French National Committee,

Confident that it is expressing the feelings of the French Nation, the ally and friend of Czechoslovakia,

Convinced that the present world crisis can only deepen the friendship and alliance between the French and Czechoslovak Nations which, united by the same destiny, are now experiencing a period of common suffering and hope,

Faithful to the traditional policy of France,

Declares that in spite of regrettable events and misunderstandings in the past it is one of the fundamental aims of its policy that the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance should rise from the dreadful trials of the present world crisis strengthened and secured for the future.

In this spirit, rejecting the agreements signed at Munich on September 29th, 1938, the French National Committee solemnly declares that it considers these agreements as null and void from their inception as well as all other acts committed during the execution, or as a consequence, of these agreements.

Recognising no territorial changes concerning Czechoslovakia which took place in 1938 or afterwards, it undertakes to do all in its power to ensure that the Czechoslovak Republic, in its frontiers of the period before September, 1938, shall obtain all effective guarantees for its military and economic security, its territorial integrity and its political unity.

Accept, Mr. Prime Minister, the assurance of my most profound respect.

Gen. Charles de Gaulle,
President of the French National Committee.

Maurice Dejean,
National Commissioner for Foreign Affairs.
To Monseigneur Jan Šrámek,
Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak Republic.'

Our answer[12], signed by the Prime Minister and Minister Jan Masaryk, read as follows:

'General,

In your letter of September 29th you have been so good as to inform me that the French National Committee,

Confident that it is expressing the feelings of the French Nation, the ally and friend of Czechoslovakia,

Convinced that the present world crisis can only deepen the friendship and alliance between the French and Czechoslovak Nations which, united by the same destiny, are now experiencing a period of common suffering and hope,

Faithful to the traditional policy of France,

Declares that in spite of regrettable events and misunderstandings in the past it is one of the fundamental aims of its policy that the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance should rise from the dreadful trials of the present world crisis strengthened and secured for the future.

You add that in this spirit, rejecting the agreements signed at Munich on September 29th, 1938, the French National Committee solemnly declares that it considers these agreements as null and void from their inception as well as all other acts committed during the execution, or as a consequence, of these agreements.

You state further that not recognising any territorial changes concerning Czechoslovakia which took place in 1938 or afterwards, the French National Committee undertakes to do all in its power to ensure that the Czechoslovak Republic, in its frontiers of the period before September, 1938, shall obtain all effective guarantees with regard to its military and economic security, its territorial integrity and its political unity.

I would like to thank you in the name of the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic for this declaration as well as for the obligations which the French National Committee has agreed to accept towards Czechoslovakia, the importance and range of which we value greatly.

The Czechoslovak Government which has never ceased to consider the French Nation an ally and friend of the Czechoslovak people is convinced that the present common trials will only strengthen this alliance and friendship to the greatest advantage of both our countries and of all peaceloving nations.

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic for its part undertakes to do all in its power to ensure that France, renewed in its strength, its independence and the integrity of its metropolitan and overseas territories, shall receive all guarantees with regard to its military security and territorial integrity, and that it shall occupy in the world that place to which it is entitled by its great past and the worth of her people.

Accept, my General, the assurance of my most profound respect.'

I considered these two documents to be *the first step* to France's liquidation of Munich. It was symbolical and of political value that it should have happened thus at the earliest possible moment and that the gesture was made by a man whose personality and actions as a soldier and politician were a symbol of resistance to the policy of 1938 as well as to the capitulation of 1940. He was also an implacable adversary of the men of 1938 as well as of those who capitulated in 1940, even though politically the first group followed Daladier and the others his chief adversary, Pétain. Both groups have the same responsibility for France's misfortunes. The capitulation of June 21st, 1940, signed in the railway carriage at Compiégne by the Pétain Government was simply the direct, inexorable and dreadful consequence of the capitulation signed at Hitler's house in Munich on September 29th, 1938.

5. *We and the French—Journey to Algiers*

Some fifteen months elapsed and France's liquidation of Munich was emphasised by new political actions and declarations. Perhaps it will be best to mention them at this point.

In January, 1944, when I was on my way back from Moscow to London, General de Gaulle invited me to pay an official visit to Algiers. The French National Committee had already built up its whole administration here and after the liberation of North Africa—mainly as a result of the American and British invasion in November, 1942—it was already in full control of the former French colonies in Africa. Though the relations of De Gaulle's France to Great Britain and the United States were not yet fully settled, the National Committee at Algiers was in reality a Provisional French Government and it behaved as such.

I accepted De Gaulle's invitation and was welcomed by him and the Algerian National Committee on January 2nd, 1944, with all the ceremonies and honours due to the head of an Allied State on the soil of liberated France (Algeria was constitutionally part of Metropolitan France). It was a politically important demonstration. In the course of my visit, I had friendly conversations with General De Gaulle and the members of the National Committee as well as with leading French soldiers about Franco-Czechoslovak matters the political importance of which it is unnecessary to stress. I was agreeably surprised to see how comparatively quickly France was consolidating and recovering both from a political and military standpoint, how General de Gaulle and other leaders were well aware what the dreadful crisis in 1938 and 1939 and France's fall in 1940

had meant for their country, and how well they realised what France would have to do to regain her old and historically well-deserved position in Europe.

As I have already mentioned, in spite of all that had happened I had never ceased to believe in France and I still believe firmly in its new and great future. I saw many symptoms of French recovery during my stay in Algeria and I noted them especially in my conversations with men who had come from France.[18] The relations of the National Committee to Great Britain and the United States were improving, with the Soviet Union they were good. French armies were already successfully taking part in heavy fighting in Italy and in the approaching invasion of Metropolitan France De Gaulle's movement was to play that political and military role which belonged to it by right in the new relationships which were arising among the Allied Nations. Though this France still had very many difficulties to face, it nevertheless seemed to me that from it might arise the new France which with its Government might again make an entrance on to the stage of allied Europe.

Thus the old problems were again on the order of the day and gradually also our French-Czechoslovak affairs. Once more I realised that true, patriotic Frenchmen had not substantially changed their attitude to Czechoslovakia and that they regarded everything that had happened during their country's years of fearful crisis from the correct angle of their national interests. This was brought out in two speeches, one by General De Gaulle and the other by me* during my official visit to French territory.

General De Gaulle said about Munich:

'When your Government and the French Committee of National Liberation concluded an agreement on September 29th, 1942, it replaced on a new basis our alliance which had been interrupted not long before by the hateful episode of Munich. After reaching a similar agreement with Great Britain, after renewing the foundations of the friendship between the Nation of which you are the head and the United States of America, you are now on your way back from Moscow where you and the Government of the Soviet Union have signed an unequivocal and firm treaty which from now onward determines, and makes secure for the future, the political co-operation of your two countries against the perpetual German danger. I can assure you, Mr. President, that no other Power is more delighted than France at the well-founded and brilliant

*Not printed (Tr.).

success of your policy—the policy of a great patriot and a great European.'

In May, 1944, when the British-American invasion of the European Continent was being prepared and when it had been decided that the invasion would be directed into France, General De Gaulle wanted to bring the dispute over the recognition of the National Committee as a Provisional Government to an end and thus decide in his favour the battle he had been waging (principally with the United States) for control of the civil administration in the liberated French territories. So he simply declared his Committee to be a Government and announced the fact through diplomatic channels to the Allied Governments. Faithful to our policy towards France, as described here, we at once decided to give official recognition to De Gaulle's National Committee as the Government of the new France. We and Belgium were among the first to do so.

M. Dejean who had meanwhile become French Minister with our Government in London proposed that we shall make a new declaration on the occasion of this act of recognition once more defining the relations between the two countries and reclarifying the question of Munich. He told me that General De Gaulle would come to London at the end of May and that we could then discuss this proposal with him. He was ready to prepare the text of the declaration.

I gave my consent and authorised Dr. Ripka to draft a declaration with Dejean. Shortly afterwards, when I had amended the proposed text in certain details and when the French Government in Algiers had similarly made its amendments, the new declaration was accepted by De Gaulle in principle on June 8th, 1944, when he visited me in London. The declaration was signed on August 22nd by De Gaulle and Dejean for France and by Monseigneur Šrámek and Jan Masaryk for us. It read:

'While again declaring that they consider the treaties of Munich with all their consequences null and void from their inception, the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Provisional Government of the French Republic declare that the relations between the two States have been restored to the same state as before the signature of those treaties.

'In confirming that the traditional policy of friendship and alliance which unites them and their common attachment to the principles of liberty and independence have been strengthened by the struggle side-by-side against the common enemy, the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Provisional Government of the French

Republic have agreed that at the appropriate time such modifications and amendments will be carried out in the existing agreements as shall be considered necessary in order that the collaboration between Czechoslovakia and France within the framework of the general security and reconstruction of Europe and the world is rendered closer and more effective.'

Thus, at this moment, France too had finally liquidated Munich during the very course of the dreadful war which Munich had started.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

[1]See Appendix, page 302.

[2]This promise was implemented in July, 1945, at the Potsdam Conference.

[3]The text of this very important Note which contained our whole *legal standpoint* on the relations of Czechoslovakia to the second World War is contained in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 446–72 (Czech edition).

[4]The complete address is printed in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 168–75 (Czech edition).

[5]See Eduard Beneš: 'Le problème autrichien et la question tchéque. Etudes sur les luttes politiques des nationalités slaves en Autriche.' Paris, 1908.

[6]I also learned later that after the British revocation of Munich, Wenzel Jaksch in the name of his Party sent an emphatic protest against it to President Roosevelt. He never gave a copy of this protest to me personally.

[7]I shall describe all my efforts to reach agreement with our Germans in my book on Munich, now in course of preparation.

[8]See the Appendix. I also gave copies to the British Foreign Office with which Jaksch was also in regular contact.

[9]In general, the transfer of our Germans was really carried out in this manner in 1946, as can be proved by documents issued by the American authorities. I do not deny that our subordinate authorities committed some, very few, excesses which were unworthy of the country of Masaryk but I always opposed them very strenuously. I condemned them publicly and categorically several times and denounced them—for example in my speech at Mělník on October 14th, 1945. My vigorous protests were published in our country and afterwards even these excesses by subordinate organs definitely ceased.

[10]See Note, Chapter VII, p. 286.

[11]On this question there is still documentation to be published including Henlein's documents on the German plans for the Czechs and the Czech provinces. For example there is a very substantial document which provides the most convincing proof of the 'good will' our Germans bore to us: *Grundplanung O.A.* found in Henlein's archives. This document is no less revealing than all the so-called 'Nuremberg documents' of Germany's 'peaceful intentions'.

[11]I commented on this event in my broadcast to Czechoslovakia from London on September 30th, 1942, in this brief statement:

'Four years ago yesterday the agreement of the four Great Powers about Czechoslovakia was signed at Munich. One of the signatories was France in the person of its Premier, and one of the chief architects of that agreement was the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. Many foolish people in Europe thought at that time that peace had been saved by this agreement. But it was a declaration of war and the beginning of a whole series of catastrophes which were then disseminated so bountifully over the European continent by those two criminals who are still ruling over Germany and Italy and whose perjured hands signed at Munich that delusive and fateful pact of a dictated peace.

In London on the fourth anniversary of this pact the Chief of Fighting France, General Charles de Gaulle and his Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, M. Dejean, met the Czechoslovak Premier, Dr. Šrámek, and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, with the object of solemnly effacing the signature of the French Premier on September 29th, 1938, from the history of our two countries. After the exchange of letters between the British and the Czechoslovak Ministers for Foreign Affairs on August 5th, 1942, which liquidated Munich between us and Great Britain, France has now solemnly done the same. General de Gaulle, who is doing this in France's name, has all the requisite moral qualifications. He revolted on June 19th, 1940, when the spirit of Munich which had paralysed the moral and military forces of France led the Government to capitulate to Hitler and then to shameful collaboration with Nazism. He raised the famous French tricolor. He gathered new military forces around it and great territories. He again conducted the French Nation after a short period of stunned delusion into resistance against the Germans. Today together with the whole movement of Fighting Frenchmen he is the real embodiment of future France, a resuscitated France, again great, fighting and revolutionary. If General de Gaulle rose against the capitulation of 1940 and if he today is liquidating the signature of Munich, he does this also because the French capitulation of 1940 had its real fatal beginning at Munich.

Whatever the internal organisation of France will be after the war, a new and liberated France is already speaking today in the signature of General de Gaulle. Together with the signatures of our Ministers, it means that France is returning to her old traditional friendship and is proclaiming solemnly that our two Nations together with Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and the other Allies will re-establish European order and freedom and re-establish the fame, greatness and strength of France and Czechoslovakia.'

(The full speech was published in Dr. Beneš's book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 176-84. Czech edition.)

[12]In particular, I had a very friendly talk with M. Vincent Auriol, afterwards President of the French Republic.

CHAPTER VII

EAST AND WEST— CZECHOSLOVAKIA AT THE CROSSROADS?

1. *Before My Visit to Moscow*

AS I have already mentioned, when I decided to visit the United States I had already begun my preparations for my journey to the Soviet Union which was to be our last decisive political step of a military and diplomatic character during our liberation fight and before our joint victory was finally attained. It was intended as a diplomatic move which was to round off and complete the whole line of our war-time policy of liberation. In the future, I think it will also be possible to regard it as the logical culmination of the policy and journeys of our great predecessors in 1848, 1867, at the beginning of the present century and, of course, of the policy and journeys of Masaryk before and during the first World War.

My visit to Russia was closely connected with the negotiations for our treaty with the Soviet Union against a possible future recrudescence of German imperialism. From the moment the Soviet Union entered the second World War, I had planned to renew the treaty concluded with Moscow in 1935 by means of a new treaty of some kind concluded before the war was ended. Already in June, 1941, I had formulated the idea that we should resume our relations with the Soviet Union at the point at which they had been interrupted by Munich. Having always of course counted upon the participation of the Soviet Union in this war, on our side, I had therefore, from the beginning of the war, always conducted all our negotiations with other countries, especially with Poland, in such a way that they would never cause any differences to arise between ourselves and the Soviet Union. We had loyally kept the other allied countries, and especially the Poles, informed about our attitude towards the Soviet Union and of our intention never to get into conflict with it.

I always had this in mind in my written statements and when discussing agreements about Central European problems. In my speech to the State Council on November 12th, 1942—I was referring on that occasion to the joint Polish-Czechoslovak Declaration of November 11th, 1940—I emphasised this as follows:

'I regard the present war as *the decisive historic opportunity to bring to an end once and for all time the pan-German "Drang nach Osten". This same*

war has proved that in order to do so, real, friendly and loyal co-operation between Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union is essential. Our relations with both are those of allies and friends and they are to remain so permanently. We hope that when full agreement has been reached between Poland and the Soviet Union, this will be followed by a full agreement between the three of us *for the specific purpose of ending the imperialist and bloodthirsty Drang nach Osten.* If we succeed in bringing this about, the whole future of Poland and of Czechoslovakia will be guaranteed. This would benefit all Europe. If not, Germany will again evoke a new catastrophe in some other form. In this I am expressing only what is my real, profound political conviction.'[1]

When, on July 18th, 1941, Ambassador Ivan Maisky and Minister Masaryk signed our first treaty of alliance with the Soviet Union for the duration of the second World War only, I considered the possibility of some more permanent and substantial declaration on the lines of the policy we had inaugurated with the Soviet Union in 1935. But I saw that at that time this would be premature. The idea had not yet ripened either in Moscow, in London, or with the other allied countries.

But when I made my preparations for my visit to the United States in 1943, I decided to try to solve this question. I was always aware of the fact that Munich with all its catastrophic European consequences would not have occurred but for the hostility of Western Europe towards the Soviet Union and the differences between them. It was clear to me that—if we were to win this second World War—such differences must be removed. If they persisted even after the second World War, either another world catastrophe would follow at once or we would be subjected to some new form of Munich and there would be another world catastrophe afterwards. Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union started from the assumption that the differences between the world and the Soviet Union were of such a character that Germany would in any eventuality and at the right moment succeed in making peace with Western Europe *which then would give it a free hand against the Soviet Union.* It was clear to me that this, *the real world catastrophe,* could only be prevented by devoted work for a firm and *permanent* agreement between the Anglo-Saxons and the Soviet Union—that it was our chief task in this situation to work for such an agreement and that, within the frame of this agreement, our own special agreement with the Soviet Union during the war would be a self-evident and internationally feasible proposition.

Being anxious to use my visit to the United States as an opportunity to work for a closer rapprochement with the Soviet Union and thus secure a

speedy victory over Hitler, I wanted to get a clear picture of the wartime and post-war policy of the Soviet Union towards the Great Powers as well as towards the smaller countries, both the Allies and the others—especially of its relations to all its neighbours, the question of non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighbour States, recognition of their full post-war sovereignty, its relations to Germany during and after the war and, *naturally, above all, its attitude towards us* and its views about our permanent relationship to the East and to the West.

It seemed to me that if full understanding were reached between ourselves and the Soviet Union in regard to all these questions, and if we trusted one another completely, it would also be possible—in the United States, too—to refer *to this actual example just as an example*. I believed that this would substantially draw all the Allies together, especially the bigger ones, that it would tend to allay wrong suspicions about the Soviet Union or even remove them and that it would help to pave the way for what happened later at the Allied conferences in Moscow and Teheran.

Early in 1943, therefore, before my visit to the United States, I started discussions in London on these lines with the Soviet Ambassador, Bogomolov. I explained the sense and the aim of my visit and ended my explanation with this conclusion: 'During my visit I shall have to explain our whole policy towards Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union. I would therefore like to ask Moscow in advance about some essential matters which are important for you as well as for us. The answers will show all our Allies what are the aims of the policy which we are following not only with regard to you but to all the others, especially Poland. This last question is the most burning one at the moment both here in London and in Washington.'

We had been trying to come to an agreement with the Poles since the beginning of 1940 in order to co-ordinate our policy with that of Poland and the Soviet Union and even in order to attempt closer Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation in future.* But these negotiations had been suspended at the end of 1942, partly because Polish-Soviet relations were in a state of crisis—a crisis which concerned the other Allies, too, including ourselves—and partly because the London Poles could not give us satisfactory guaran-

*A joint declaration providing for close political and economic association was signed on November 11th, 1940. Another document of a similar nature entitled 'Joint Polish-Czechoslovak Agreement' was signed on January 23rd, 1942—after the U.S.S.R. had been forced into the war. The closer association (which almost amounted to federation) was not, however, to come into force until ratified by the Parliaments of the two countries. Even in 1942, therefore, it was widely held that the agreement would never come into operation (Tr.).

tees about their policy in regard to all the points at issue between us arising from territorial disputes and from Poland's attitude at the time of, and before, Munich.

I therefore asked Ambassador Bogomolov to procure for me from Moscow answers to the following questions before my departure for Washington: Was Moscow ready to conclude with Czechoslovakia a reaty similar to the Anglo-Soviet Pact and adapted to Czechoslovak conditions? Would Moscow consider it possible to stress in the treaty the mutual obligation of both partners not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other partner? Could the Soviet Union tell us in principle what its attitude towards Germany would be after the war and could it support our view of the necessity to transfer Fascist Germans from Czechoslovakia? Could Moscow accept in principle our proposal for an agreement to halt any future German *Drang nach Osten* for all time? Could it accept this as a basis for our future alliance and also consent to post-war Poland being included in this treaty and in our system of co-operation by means of a common agreement between our three countries?

These were the questions which I discussed from all angles in a number of conversations with Ambassador Bogomolov in March, 1943, and which I finally put to him in the form of a direct inquiry to the Soviet Government when he visited me in Aston Abbotts at the end of March.

The answer arrived on April 23rd. On the same day Bogomolov asked if he could come to see me at Aston Abbotts. He arrived in a cheerful and excited frame of mind. It seemed to me that he regarded the success of these negotiations as his own. He brought a positive answer in essential points and he stressed, rightly, how extremely important this was for the future from the point of view of Moscow—as well as from our own. He gave Moscow's answer as follows:

'If you were to put forward a comprehensive draft of the treaty we have been discussing during the past weeks, the Soviet Government would not in principle give a negative answer. The idea of non-interference in internal affairs could be incorporated and the Soviet Government would have no objection to post-war co-operation with Poland on the lines set out in the Czechoslovak question. The Soviet Government therefore invites you to prepare a draft of the treaty and submit it to the Soviet Government.'

With regard to Germany, the Soviet Government was not able to formulate its views in detail at this stage. It was determined to prosecute the war against Germany to the very end but its detailed views on post-war Germany were greatly dependent on those of Great Britain and America. Moscow would therefore only be able to tell me more on this

basic matter in the near future. Its views about the transfer of German Fascists from Czechoslovakia, although at present not negative, could only be formulated definitely at a later stage.

Not long afterwards—on June 5th, while I was in America—Bogomolov visited Minister Ripka and told him that he could confirm Moscow's above attitude towards Germany and further that Moscow was now definitely in favour of the transfer of the German Nazi population from Czechoslovakia. Ambassador Bogomolov then asked Dr. Ripka to pass this information on to me at once in Washington.[2]

I loyally informed the British Government after my return from America about these discussions in which Ministers Masaryk and Ripka also participated at various stages. I also told President Roosevelt and the representatives of the State Department (Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles) about them personally during my stay in Washington. My speeches in America and Canada in May and June, 1943, were naturally influenced by these discussions with Moscow.

I wanted to leave for Moscow already in the summer of 1943 immediately after my return to England from the United States. But discussions supervened between London, Washington and Moscow and ourselves about the proposed treaty and this postponed my departure until December, 1943.

In Washington I found full understanding for our policy *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union in my very first conversations and Roosevelt as well as Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles agreed to it in principle. Our treaty was regarded by the American Government as typical of what the Soviet Union's other neighbours should do, in time, so as to secure their independence and non-interference in their internal affairs or in their social structure on the side of the Soviet Union.

In London the situation was somewhat different. Winston Churchill was, broadly speaking, rather favourable to our point of view. But in the Foreign Office two opinions existed among the officials. One section agreed with us; the other considered that we were leaning too far to the East to the special disadvantage of the Poles, who, they said, would thus be alone in their attitude towards the Soviet Union and the Soviet desire to solve its frontier problems with Poland in the spirit of the Curzon Line. The great majority of the London Poles, when they heard about our plans were very strongly opposed to our policy. They saw in it the end of their earlier plans to establish a Central European Federation led by Poland which was to be a barrier against Germany as well as against the Soviet Union.

Between June and November, 1943, after my return from Washington, I met Mr. Eden three times for long conferences, in which (in the presence of Jan Masaryk and Hubert Ripka on our side and Mr. Strang and Mr. Nichols on the other) we discussed all aspects of this policy. At the outset, Eden, without opposing either the treaty or my visiting Moscow, was inclined to think that in view of British public opinion, I might indeed go to Moscow at once and agree on the treaty but that I should only sign it later, preferably after the conclusion of the armistice with Germany, when the position with regard to the Soviet Union and Poland and the Soviet Union's post-war policy would be quite clear to all the Allies.

I did not agree with this postponement.* I argued that the precedent we established and our agreement with the Soviets might provide the best proof of what the real policy of the Soviet Union probably would be and could be after the war; that it was in our interest and that of all others to show the world by the example of our treaty with the Soviet Union what the Soviet Union wanted and what policy it intended to follow; that far from driving them apart it should and could draw the Soviet Union nearer to Great Britain as well as to the United States and that it could finally set the minds of all the other Allies at rest with regard to the aims of the Soviet Union. Moreover, above all, it would ultimately make for the normalisation of conditions and for the peaceful development of the Soviet Union itself in Europe and the world! In reply to all questions I repeated emphatically that I accepted at its face value what the Soviet Union was promising us and that in my experience I had hitherto had no reason at all to mistrust its word.[3]

At first there was a rather wide difference between us though—I emphasize this again—Great Britain *never opposed this treaty in principle*. On the contrary, Great Britain stressed that in principle it agreed to the conclusion of our treaty with Moscow. The only question was *when* to sign it. On the other side the Soviet Government—when we had decided to have a treaty and agreed about its contents—made it a condition and insisted on it firmly that if I went to Moscow the treaty would have to be signed on that occasion.

But the British Government—and Eden personally—drew the very important conclusion from these negotiations that considerable uncertainties and differences of opinion existed between London and Moscow, even possible conflicts in their mutual policy—during the war and still more

*There is every possibility that if Dr. Beneš had not gone to Moscow the Soviet Government would have set up a rival Czechoslovak Government as it did in the case of Poland (Tr.).

after the war—and that the background of our treaty negotiations showed these possible differences very clearly. They came to the conclusion that these differences should be looked into and that it would be advisable to reach substantial unity of views on the chief problems of war and peace between the three chief Allied Powers, Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union. This, in my view, gave birth to the idea of calling the Moscow Conference of the three Allied Foreign Ministers in October, 1943, which was followed by the Teheran Conference between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin in November and December of the same year.

I think, therefore, that I am not wrong in supposing that the Moscow Conference *was the direct result or was at least hastened by the negotiations for our treaty with Moscow*. At all events during our discussions in London in August and September, 1943, Mr. Eden finally urged that I should not go to Moscow until after the meeting of the three Ministers—Hull, Molotov and Eden—who, he said, would meet as soon as possible in *London* when it was expected that all questions concerning the general co-operation of the three Powers would be cleared up so that nothing would then stand in the way of the conclusion of our treaty. The conference actually met within a month, *but at the request of the Soviet Government its sessions were held in Moscow*.

I agreed with the procedure and declared that I would go to Moscow in any case after the meeting of the three Ministers and would agree to the signing of the treaty between us and the Soviet Union and also put it into operation. At the same time I urged in Moscow that the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Molotov, should place the question of our treaty on the agenda of the conference and inform the representatives of the United States and Great Britain of the agreed text of the treaty. Molotov did so. Eden and Hull took note of our actions and expressed their satisfaction at the wording, the sense and the aim of the treaty.

I think that the whole result of our loyal attitude towards all our Allies and of our policy in general may be considered a real success for Czechoslovakia. My visit and the signing of the treaty took place shortly after the Moscow Conference. To a certain degree it became one of the sensations of war policy and diplomacy in the year 1943, and without doubt it had a great importance not only for our future policy and that of the Soviet Union, but for the whole camp of the Allies and also of the Axis.

2. *The Great Conferences: Casablanca and Washington—Moscow, Teheran and Cairo*

Broadly speaking, the year 1943 was a turning-point not only in

military sphere, but to a considerable degree also in the war ideology and the plans and ideas of co-operation between the Allies during the war and still more so in regard to peace and the post-war period. For a long while, uncertainty about the progress of the war events delayed the clarification of Allied views about war aims and peace. But when in the course of 1943 it became clear on the Eastern front that the Soviet Union was no longer suffering defeats but that the Western Powers could not achieve full victory over Germany and Japan without the Soviet Union, the political situation among the Allies crystallised to the extent that all saw and recognised that clearer formulations of peace and war aims had become quite indispensable.

Up to the end of 1942, the Allied war ideology was stated in quite general terms only, in the Atlantic Charter and the British-Soviet Treaty. But these were not sufficient for the concrete solution of all problems and a *practical*, successful and joint day-to-day war policy. Further discussions and agreements were necessary. These took place in the course of six conferences held during 1943, first between President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill at Casablanca (January 14th–24th), at Washington (May 11th–24th) and at Quebec (August 11th–24th) and then between the three Great Powers at Moscow (October 19th–November 1st), at Cairo (November 22nd–26th) and at Teheran (November 28th–December 1st).

The course of the negotiations and the decisions at these conferences were naturally dependent upon and controlled above all by the Allied war successes. Gradually as military victories were won new *political* decisions became necessary. As the Allied Armies progressed, a new war ideology was formed and developed and the practical war policy of the Allies changed and was completed. The occupation of Morocco and Algeria and the victory of General Montgomery in the Eastern Mediterranean demanded preparations for a decision on the whole Mediterranean campaign, on the future fate of Italy and, especially, on the definite form of co-operation with France.

Thus came about the Conference at Casablanca in January, 1943. It discussed in detail the whole future of the Mediterranean campaign, *but its most important public act was the agreement between Roosevelt and Churchill* that there would be no armistice discussions with the Axis—that the Axis States would have to *surrender unconditionally*. This decision had the effect of a bomb. The Soviet Union subscribed to it fully. Also at the Casablanca Conference the problem of France was discussed and in spite of a number of difficulties the first foundations were laid for the agreement which

followed in May, 1943, between the French themselves—General Giraud and General de Gaulle—for the transfer of the French Committee from London to Algiers and for the gradual but complete recognition of the new international legal position of the Fighting French representing France both militarily and politically as a great power.

The discussions about the Mediterranean which began at Casablanca were continued between Churchill and Roosevelt in Washington and Quebec in the summer of 1943. Preparations were made for the final attack on Italy, for an agreement between America and Great Britain on the concrete conditions for ending hostilities with Italy and for further discussions to clarify the situation of France. After moving from London to Algiers, the French National Committee created new conditions on its own national territory, consolidated its internal affairs militarily and politically, built up a democratic State organisation and thus became a real Provisional Government preparing the direct liberation of Metropolitan France in agreement with Great Britain and the United States. The Soviet Union effectively supported this evolution so that the camp of the Allies was consolidating very appreciably in the political sphere and political conditions in the Mediterranean were clearing up considerably, though not completely, with regard to the imminent fall of Italy.

But the sudden—and so pitiful—fall of Mussolini's Fascist Italy (on June 24th, 1943) which came unexpectedly soon after the attack on Sicily, showed how necessary it was to be prepared in time for the end of the war. The Anglo-Saxon Powers had no sufficiently clear ideas about what they would have to do in Italy's internal policy after the fall of Fascism. Similarly, the Soviet Union until then had not been sufficiently engaged in the Mediterranean campaign just as the other two Allies were not in the Eastern sector. The Soviet Union waged its own war on the Eastern front —though with the very abundant help of Great Britain and America on sea, in the air and in materials. But there was insufficient unity of ideas. The dispute about the so-called second front continued and was even increasing. Since the war on the Continent of Europe was being waged chiefly on the Eastern front there still remained an impression of two wars: an Anglo-American war and a Soviet one.

This fact was very effectively used by German propaganda. After their defeat at Stalingrad the Germans knew that they could only end the war without total disaster if they were able to split the Allies politically and diplomatically. From the spring of 1943, therefore, propaganda against the so-called danger of Bolshevism and for the so-called saving of civilisation from the Soviet Union was continually stepped up with increasing vigour.

The Germans depicted the dreadful future facing Europe and the world if Great Britain and America did not separate from the Soviet Union and let Germany defeat it or perhaps even help Germany to do so. In disorganised Europe—especially in the countries poisoned by Fascism and quasi-Fascism of various kinds—there were still millions of people in 1943 so blinded by the crisis of the past few years and psychologically so deadened by their class, national or personal egotism, that this propaganda trick had a certain success.

This was plainly Germany's last desperate attempt to save itself. It seems that it came at the right moment because it called forth the right reaction. In the end the Allies *had to try* politically, diplomatically and militarily to discuss all the war problems which till then had remained in doubt and to unify their policies at least in their main aspects. It was necessary to *demonstrate clearly that the war was one and indivisible, that its chief aims were common to all* and that this war comradeship must not and would not be destroyed by anybody. It was necessary to emphasize that this comradeship was of such a nature that the Allies were really not bargaining about the second front but that the question of the second front was a question of *joint* preparations, *joint* calculations, *joint military plans and at the end a joint and united victory.*

In addition, the three—or four—chief powers conducting the war (Great Britain, the Soviet Union, the United States and China) also had to formulate jointly a practical policy on their main post-war aims for Europe and the world—for example: what was to happen with Germany, how would practical effect be given to the political and economic co-operation of the Great Powers and how would the future security system of Europe and the world be prepared, what would happen to some small States and what about the so-called federation plans in Central Europe, how did the Soviet Union view its own post-war position, what was to be done about the Soviet-Polish quarrel and so on?

Only if these concrete questions were sufficiently cleared up could the fears of some countries be removed that the Soviet Union had some particular revolutionary plans in respect of the rest of Europe and only so could all the Allies be completely convinced that no so-called Bolshevisation or Sovietisation of Central, Southern and Western Europe was being prepared—as was assiduously spread by the German propaganda machine.

At that vitally important moment, two Allied conferences were held—in October, 1943, in Moscow and from November 28th to December 1st of the same year in Teheran. In addition there was the Anglo-American-Chinese conference in Cairo towards the end of November, 1943. These

conferences brought a substantial elucidation of all these questions, and of others, and caused a far-reaching and favourable change in the atmosphere of the Allied camp.

The Moscow Conference was held from October 19th to November 1st and Ministers Molotov, Eden and Cordell Hull participated with their political and military advisers. Vyatcheslav Molotov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, presided. It discussed a number of vital military and political problems arising from the situation of the Allies at the beginning of the fifth year of war; it prepared a basis for real and loyal military and political co-operation at the start of the last phase of the war and for securing quick and final victory. The Conference also laid foundations for real agreement and friendship between the three participating Powers. It approved some resolutions of principle which, completed later by resolutions adopted at Teheran, laid a foundation for the joint policy of the three, or four, principal Powers for the prosecution of the war to final victory and for jointly preparing the construction of the subsequent peace.

The Conference then agreed on a joint policy towards Italy. Fascism and its whole heritage would be destroyed. Conditions would be laid down for Italy's return to a democratic régime and the Italian Nation itself would have to bring about this return. To draft the final conditions of peace for Italy a special Allied Committee was set up in which, in addition to Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union, three other countries, France, Yugoslavia and Greece were represented. The Conference adopted a definite decision on Austria's independence and on the punishment of all Axis criminals who had been guilty of military or other cruelties against the population of Allied Nations. This declaration was fundamental, resolute and categorical. It dealt with all German persecutions and cruelties in all the countries they and the Allies of the Axis had occupied. It thus guaranteed that our people too would get justice for their sufferings and that those guilty of crimes and terror in our country would be mercilessly punished.

Finally the Conference took these two important decisions:

It declared that it was in the national interest of the three Great Powers and of all the Allies that their existing close co-operation should continue both in war-time and *in peace-time after the war*, because only in this way would victory be won, an advantageous peace secured and made safe for generations. The Conference established in London an Advisory Committee of the three Great Powers for the permanent exchange of views on current political and military questions, to maintain this full and systematic

political co-operation and to prepare the conditions for ending hostilities.

And it completed this basis of future co-operation by a far-reaching decision on *future post-war security*. The enemy States were to be completely disarmed after their capitulation, the whole system of their future disarmament would be insured, and the international regulation of post-war disarmament maintained, by joint agreement. The Allied States would establish a new security system to preserve peace which would be general, on a world scale, open to all countries, great and small, and after victory had been secured the Allies would remain in close co-operation to guard peace in such a way that—until the permanent and actual introduction of a joint security and international order—they themselves could at once undertake the necessary military steps to defend peace against any new violation.

Finally it was decided that after the end of the present military operations the Allies would only employ their military forces on the territories of other States for reasons of security and then only after joint agreement. This meant after the war ended *the military occupation of any part of the whole Continent of Europe would only be on a basis of full unity and the mutual agreement of all three Powers.*

The Moscow Conference was generally considered to have been very successful. And in my opinion it really was a great success at the time. It was the first general conference of the three Great Powers of such a kind and such a compass. And, if due consideration is given not only to the uncertainty, the vagueness and mutual distrust hitherto prevailing in the Allied camp, but also to all the decisions of the Moscow Conference together with all their consequences, one must draw the conclusion that the three Great Powers had achieved real unity in their *principal* war and peace aims.

This important agreement was then supplemented and rounded off at the Conference of the three leading Allied statesmen, President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and Premier Stalin with their advisers, held at Teheran from November 28th to December 1st. The purport of this second Conference was defined in the official declaration issued in Teheran, the contents of which are very explicit:

> 'We, the President of the United States of America, the Prime Minister of Great Britain and the Premier of the Soviet Union have met these four days past in this the capital of our ally, Iran, and have shaped and confirmed our common policy.
>
> 'We expressed our determination that our Nations shall work together in war and in the peace that will follow.

'As to war, our Military Staffs have joined in our Round Table discussions and we have concerted our plans for the destruction of the German forces. We have reached complete agreement as to the scope and timing of the operations which will be undertaken from the east, west, and south.

'The common understanding which we have here reached guarantees that victory will be ours.

'And as to peace, we are sure that our concord will make it an enduring peace. We recognize fully the supreme responsibility resting upon us and all the United Nations to make a peace which will command the goodwill of the overwhelming masses of the peoples of the world and banish the scourge and terror of war for many generations.

'With our diplomatic advisers we have surveyed the problems of the future. We shall seek the co-operation and the active participation of all nations large and small whose peoples in heart and mind are dedicated as are our own peoples to the elimination of tyranny and slavery, oppression and intolerance. We will welcome them as they may choose to come into a world family of Democratic Nations.

'No power on earth can prevent our destroying the German armies by land, their U-boats by sea and their war plants from the air. Our attacks will be relentless and increasing.

'From these friendly conferences we look with confidence to the day when all peoples of the world may live free lives untouched by tyranny and according to their varying desires and their own consciences.

'We came here with hope and determination. We leave here friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose.'

It can be said of the Teheran discussions that this was the first conference at which the leaders of the three world Powers spoke to one another with a frankness and sincerity which till then was unparallelled between them about all the steps which were necessary to clear up the military and political problems existing in the Allied camp. *They agreed on the military decisions* required for the establishment of the so-called *second front in Western Europe in the spring of 1944* and on the future direction of the Allied war which this involved and they exchanged views about the solution of all the chief problems of international post-war policy without shirking even the most difficult and most delicate questions.'

Both in its form and course the Conference at Teheran was something quite new. The discussions were not merely decisive negotiations between the three leading Allied Powers but also an agreement between the three most characteristic leading personalities of the Allied camp—personalities

who differed very greatly the one from the other. The meetings took place in the form of free discussions at the Soviet Embassy in Teheran 'around the table'. They were friendly, without formal resolutions, and consisted of entirely frank expressions of the views and opinions of each partner so that each was able to know not only what the other was expressly asking for, but also, to a considerable degree, what he was thinking and how he viewed their common future. Besides Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin there were also present: The American Ambassador Harriman and Harry Hopkins, Anthony Eden and Ambassador Kerr for the British, Molotov and Voroshilov for the Soviet Union.

All parties were generally agreed that the results of the talks were satisfactory as I was personally able to ascertain from my discussions with most of the participants in this Conference. There were no wide divergencies about the main problems of Germany. All agreed on the necessity for a hard peace and they did not exclude strong action against it even in the matter of frontiers. Stalin received detailed information about the second front: about the state of British and American preparations and when, at the latest, they intended to invade the European Continent (May-June, 1944). The Soviet participants accepted and agreed to this. The joint policy of the three States towards France and China and some colonial problems were also discussed.

Stalin quite plainly and frankly outlined the policy of the Soviet Government in regard to the Western frontiers of the Soviet Union and reiterated that he wanted an independent and strong Poland adding that they could not give up the amended Curzon Line (according to which Vilno and Lwow would also remain in the Soviet Union) but that they supposed Poland would be compensated at the expense of Germany—especially by receiving Eastern Prussia, part of which, however, including the town of Königsberg, would be incorporated in the Soviet Union. Great Britain and the United States took note of this point of view. This conference also showed the first signs of the intention to fix military—and therewith also political—spheres of influence for the Eastern front as well as for the Western front. It was clear to both East and West that they would have to invade Germany. Where these spheres should or would meet was not definitely fixed. But it can be supposed that the Soviet Union was already hinting that it was counting on its sphere including in any case North-Eastern Germany, the whole of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary. Probably there were no objections from the side of the British or the Americans seeing that the invasion of France was only to come about in the spring of the following year. *As I have already mentioned,*

we were not told anything of these plans at the time either by the Soviets or by the Western Powers. The extent of these arrangements only became clear to us at the time of the Slovak revolt, when for this reason we sensed that certain difficulties existed on the side of the British and Americans in giving aid to the revolt.

As to the future system of security, it was clearly indicated

(*a*) that it was sure to be established,

(*b*) that it was to be a general system, not for Europe only (Roosevelt and Stalin stated plainly that their countries could not participate unless this was the case),

(*c*) that it would be based on the military strength of the leading Allied Powers,

(*d*) that though the Great Powers would play the leading rôle, all smaller Allied countries would participate on a fair basis.

Thus it can be seen that the most far-reaching problems of the future peace was discussed at Teheran. So far as our country was concerned, the decisions on the whole coincided with our long-pursued policy of securing first victory in the war and then a victorious peace—victorious for us as well as the others. I therefore regarded the Teheran Conference as a great success and I moulded all my further discussions in Moscow as well as my later ones in London and our negotiations with the Americans to fit the results of Teheran. This also covered the advance of the Soviet Army into Central Europe and on to our territory which I regarded as a certainty—especially after Teheran—though I did not exclude the possibility that the Western Allies would also try to reach it.

When Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin parted after the Conference of Teheran, they had also drawn closer together personally and had strengthened the feelings of co-operation and friendship between their States and Nations. I am convinced that at this Conference these three leading men together with all their advisers did great service to their countries, to all Allied Nations and to their war effort, and above all to promote the final victory. The Conference at Teheran therefore has a really important place in the history of the second World War though some of its decisions caused differences to arise later but not till 1945 and the years which followed.

To recapitulate: considered together with the Moscow Conference, the Conference at Teheran meant that the three Great Powers were agreed in matters of principle as regards the war, victory and peace. Furthermore, it was now certain that while the war lasted nothing could destroy the agreement of the three States and enable Nazism to escape destruction by

exploiting their differences. Finally, in spite of difficult discussions and divergencies of views which began to be apparent later in a number of questions and which caused considerable difficulties for all three countries, in spite of the differences between the regimes and governmental systems of the Anglo-American Powers and the Soviet State, the three countries, after the Conference at Teheran, were so strongly aware of the substantial identity of all their vital interests in the war, that they subsequently did their utmost *to enable us to fight one single war and prepare one single peace, together.*

Between November 22nd and November 26th, 1943, there was a military and political conference at Cairo between President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and the Chinese Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek in which their military and political staffs and advisers took part. The political and military situation of the whole war against Japan was discussed, plans for further military operations against Japan were agreed upon and a far-reaching decision was made which, if realised, would mean the complete transformation of conditions in the Far East. Japan was to be forced to capitulate and would be made to hand back not only all the territories of which it had taken possession by force and betrayal during the present war, but also those which it had conquered since 1914 and at China's expense since 1894–1895. In particular, independence was also to be restored to Korea. This would mean a real revolution in existing conditions in the Far East and in the whole Pacific.

The decisions of the Allied Conferences of 1943 were thus of the utmost importance—indeed they were decisive in regard to many problems. They brought the certainty of a joint and united prosecution of the war to a victorious conclusion. They also gave at least a *hope* of agreement in principle about mutual co-operation *even after the war* and the preservation of mutual confidence even when the interests of the Powers concerned should conflict in the future. They gave *promise* that world peace would be safe—perhaps for some generations. *And they promised, in the spirit of international democracy,* that the other Allies as well, *especially the small States,* would acquire a legal place in the new world organisation.

3. *Signature of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty*

After his return from the Moscow Conference, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden informed me that the question of our treaty had been fully clarified during the negotiations in Moscow and that therefore nothing stood in the way of my going to Moscow nor the signing of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty.

My draft of the treaty which I had submitted to Ambassador Bogomolov on August 22nd, 1943, had already been discussed between us and the Soviet Government during August, September and October, 1943, and was therefore fully agreed before my visit. Later it was changed in some details by Envoy Fierlinger and the Soviet Foreign Office in Moscow.[5] On December 12th, 1943, the day after my arrival the treaty was solemnly signed by Molotov on behalf of the Soviet Union and Ambassador Zdeněk Fierlinger on behalf of the Czechoslovak Republic in the presence of Kalinin and myself, of Stalin, Voroshilov and a number of Czechoslovak and Soviet politicians and soldiers. And the Treaty was ratified immediately afterwards.[6]

The text of the 'Treaty of friendship, mutual aid and post-war co-operation between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics,' signed at Moscow on December 12th, 1934, is as follows:

'The President of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, wishing to amend and to supplement the existing treaty of mutual aid between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, signed at Prague on May 16th, 1935,[7] and to prolong the Agreement between the Government of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on their joint prosecution of the war against Germany signed in London on July 18th, 1941; wishing to co-operate after the war for the maintenance of peace and the prevention of a new attack by Germany and to secure their lasting friendship and mutual peaceful co-operation after the war, have decided to conclude to this effect a Treaty and have nominated as their representatives:

The President of the Czechoslovak Republic—Mr. Zdeněk Fierlinger, Ambassador of the Czechoslovak Republic to the Soviet Union.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—M. Vyatcheslav Mikhailovitch Molotov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs,

who, after exchanging their full powers and finding them in good and due form, have agreed upon the following provisions:

Article 1

The High Contracting Parties, after mutually agreeing to unite in a policy of permanent friendship and friendly post-war co-operation as well as of mutual aid, undertake to give one another military and other

aid and support in the present war against Germany and against all the States allied with it in acts of aggression in Europe.

Article 2

The High Contracting Parties bind themselves not to enter during the present war into any negotiations with the Hitler Government or any other Government in Germany which does not clearly renounce all aggressive intentions, and not to negotiate or to conclude without mutual agreement any armistice or peace treaty with Germany or any other State allied with it in acts of aggression in Europe.

Article 3

Confirming their pre-war policy of peace and mutual aid expressed in their Treaty signed at Prague on May 16th, 1935, the High Contracting Parties undertake that if either of them shall in the post-war period be drawn into military action against Germany on account of a renewal of its policy of *Drang nach Osten** or with any other State which allies itself with Germany in such a war directly or in any other way, the other High Contracting Party will immediately give to the Contracting Party which has been drawn into military actions in this manner all military and other support and aid at its disposal.

Article 4

The High Contracting Parties having regard to the interests of their mutual security, have agreed to maintain close and friendly co-operation after the re-establishment of peace and to regulate their actions according to the principles of mutual respect of their independence and sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of the other signatory. They have agreed to develop their economic relations on the broadest possible scale and to grant one another all possible economic aid after the war.

Article 5

Each High Contracting Party undertakes not to conclude any alliance and not to participate in any coalition directed against the other High Contracting Party.

Article 6

This Treaty becomes valid immediately upon signature and is to be ratified in the shortest possible time. The instruments of ratification shall be exchanged at Moscow as soon as possible.

*It is noteworthy that the treaty is only operative in the case of a German attack *eastwards* (Tr.).

This Treaty remains valid for twenty years from the time of signature. If one of the High Contracting Parties does not give notice of its intention to denounce the Treaty not less than twelve months before the expiration of this twenty years' period, the validity of the Treaty shall be prolonged for another five years and shall so continue until one of the High Contracting Parties shall not less than twelve months before the expiration of the current five years' period declare in writing that it intends to end the validity of the Treaty.

In witness hereof the representatives have signed the Treaty and have attached thereto their seals.

Executed in two copies, each in the Czechoslovak and Russian languages.

Both copies have the same validity.

Moscow, December 12th, 1943.

On the authority of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.:

(signed) V. MOLOTOV.

On the authority of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic:

(signed) ZD. FIERLINGER.'

At the same time we and the Soviet Government signed a special '*Protocol to the Treaty of friendship, mutual aid and post-war co-operation between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concluded on December 12th, 1943*,' which contained the so-called 'Polish clause' and met our wish for future agreement with Poland.[8] It read as follows:

'In concluding the Treaty of friendship, mutual aid and post-war co-operation between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Contracting Parties agree that if any third country having common frontiers with the Czechoslovak Republic or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and having in this war been an object of German aggression, expresses the wish to adhere to this Treaty, it will be given the opportunity to do so after mutual agreement between the Governments of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Union of the U.S.S.R. and this Treaty by such adhesion shall acquire the character of a trilateral treaty.

This Protocol has been signed in two copies each in the Czechoslovak and Russian languages.

Both copies have the same validity.

Moscow, December 12th, 1943.

On the authority of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.:

(Signed): V. Molotov.

On the authority of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic:

(Signed): Zd. Fierlinger.

On December 21st, before returning to London, I spoke on the Moscow radio about the sense and significance of this treaty for ourselves, for the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe.[9] I think that everything I said on that occasion has afterwards been confirmed by events. I considered my visit and all that was done during it for Czechoslovakia a great success of our policy. The international public which had watched this visit with close attention, evaluated these events in the same manner. When I returned to London, I made a report about the treaty to the State Council in which I added the following to what I had said from Moscow to Prague and to Slovakia:[10]

(*a*) We regard this treaty as one of the links in the post-war system of security. Another specially important link, in our opinion, is and will be the British-Soviet treaty of May 26th, 1942, which with our treaty fits into the general security system of the world in which the United States, France and the other Allied States are also taking part.

For us this treaty, by its whole character, its twenty years' term and its automatic renewal, means a *permanent* defence against the recrudescence of pan-Germanism, against the *Drang nach Osten* and against another bandit acquisition of German 'Lebensraum'. It is a guarantee of our frontiers and a guarantee that Munich shall never be repeated. In short, it provides a high degree of security for our independence and our Republic, such as we never had before.

(*b*) Our joint proposal and desire to concert this policy of defence against German imperialism with an independent, democratic Poland, friendly to us both, *is sincere, real and lasting*. In this way could be brought about the final settlement of all disputes between the three of us and the preparation of a secure future for these three Slav Nations and States as well as the final establishment of peace in Eastern and Central Europe and therewith perhaps in Europe as a whole. No future Germany could ever dare to provoke a new World War against the alliance and harmonious co-operation of these three Slav States for the defence of peace in this part of the globe. Such an agreement could therefore be of the greatest importance for the future peace of all Europe.

We agreed in Moscow that we will not cease to work for such an agreement. It would involve agreement between Czechoslovaks, Poles, Ukrainians, White Russians and Russians. Such an agreement has never yet existed between these Slav Nations. This is no attempt to construct some new special form of pan-Slavism. It is an attempt to bring a definite end to historic German banditism and pan-German imperialism by the harmonious co-operation of three free, independent democratic Slav States.

That is our project and our object.[11] Its success depends upon us all. The Germans will do all they can to ensure its failure. Fascism and Nazism will regard it as their deathblow. This fact should serve as a challenge for us all, in spite of momentary difficulties and disputes, to take advantage of this war and these immense historical events to bring about our rapprochement and the liquidation of all differences still existing between us. Hardly will there be in history another moment so propitious. If we are able to fulfil these tasks we will have done great service not to ourselves only but also to the other peace-loving Nations of Europe and the whole world.

4. *My Political Discussions with Stalin and Molotov in Moscow*

My political discussions with Moscow actually began during my journey from London to the Soviet Union when I was met at Habaniyah Airfield, near Bagdad, by Alexander Korneytchuk (Molotov's Deputy in the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) who came to meet me.

We[12] left England by plane during the night of November 23rd and travelled via Gibraltar, Tripoli and Egypt. In and around Cairo I refreshed all my memories of old Egyptian culture and civilisation. I inspected the relics and excavations, visited the places of interest and thus quickly absorbed the ancient past. From Egypt we flew via Palestine, the Dead Sea, Transjordan and Iraq to Bagdad; then across Iran to Teheran. It was a beautiful trip during which I went over in my mind all that these countries had meant for the history of mankind.

In Teheran we were received with all ceremony by the young Shah of Iran. Both he and those around him (people, intelligentsia, university authorities, Army and Parliament) were anxious to repay the service I had had occasion to render to Iran at Geneva many years before in Iran's oil dispute with Great Britain.* The Shah also expressed his full satisfaction about his meeting with Stalin during the Teheran Conference. Teheran University conferred on me in the course of a special Iranian ceremony the honorary degree of Doctor.*

*In 1932. This service had evidently been forgotten when Iran nationalised its oilfields in 1951 (Tr.).

From Teheran we went by air to Baku and from Baku by train for nearly four days through Caucasian regions to Moscow. Our route was almost entirely through regions which the Germans had already devastated in their barbarian manner. It was a long tiring journey filled with vivid impressions and reflections and, of course, also with anticipations and preparations for the discussions in Moscow.

Alexander Korneytchuk and Ambassador Fierlinger were waiting for me at the airfield in the desert near Bagdad. We spent a whole week there because of bad winter weather over the Caucasus and Southern Russia. While waiting to continue our journey we discussed all the questions I wanted to raise in Moscow: questions about the war, peace, Germany, Hungary, especially Poland and the future Slav policy of the Soviet Union, our relations to the Russians and Ukrainians and our future joint policy with the Soviet Union. From what I was told by Korneytchuk, our good friend, a talented writer and a great Ukrainian and Soviet patriot, I judged that we would agree well together in Moscow on every point. Korneytchuk himself prepared notes about our talks for Stalin and Molotov so that when our discussions began in Moscow, both Molotov and Stalin were informed about my views on the chief problems.

My stay in Moscow began with an official visit to Kalinin and a ceremonial dinner given by Kalinin in my honour. Molotov and Stalin were present as well as the whole official political and military world together with the heads of the Politburo. On our side Ambassador Fierlinger and General Pika,* Deputy Klement Gottwald, Professor Zdeněk Nejedlý and Dr. Vrbenský, and my suite from London took part in the official receptions. It was during this dinner that I had my first conversations with Stalin[13] and Molotov. We went cursorily but objectively through all the chief problems of the war and the future peace. I saw at once that we really would agree—our views were fundamentally identical. On this occasion I also met all the important political personalities of the Soviet Union, a number of the chief soldiers and leading officials. I saw on what terms they were with one another, the main lines on which they worked together and how Soviet home and foreign affairs were conducted. This told me much about the Soviet Union itself.

In the political discussions which followed I first had two talks about all our problems with Foreign Commissar V. Molotov. With him were Korneytchuk and Lebedev[14] and with me, Ambassador Fierlinger and Smutný. Then I had two long talks with Stalin at which Molotov and

*Afterwards executed by the Communist Government of Czechoslovakia on a charge of having spied for the West while in the U.S.S.R., see p. 146 (Tr.).

Fierlinger were present. We discussed every point which needed elucidation and exchanged and co-ordinated our views in full and friendly agreement about our joint problems and our future joint policy in Czechoslovak and other European questions.

I paid many visits to factories, to military installations and institutions, to cultural and scientific institutes, libraries, theatres and cinemas. I spoke to a number of people from simple workers to technicians and managers, from simple soldiers to officers and generals, to politicians, diplomats, artists, professors, writers. Everywhere I carefully watched the life, the work, the people: men, women, children. All was focused on war, the front, victory, post-war reconstruction, and—in connection with us on our mutual co-operation and the future Slav partnership. Czechoslovakia was everywhere received with joy, with sincerity, with cordiality.

I brought back unforgettable impressions. Of all the political journeys I have undertaken in the course of my political life, I consider this one, which took place in circumstances so exceptional both for the Soviet Union and my own country, to be one of the most important for our post-war future. I think also that once more I obtained a good picture of life in the Soviet Union and was able to deepen my understanding of the nations of the Soviet Union.

Instead of going into detail about my conversations with the Moscow leaders, I shall put on documentary record here a part of the cabled report which I sent from Moscow to London to Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk and the Government about the Moscow negotiations as a whole as soon as I had finished my principal conversations:

1. The political discussions and negotiations have taken place up to this point in the utmost harmony, friendship and cordiality. The discussions were carried on chiefly with Kalinin, Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov. Of special importance were two conversations with Stalin, two evenings in succession in the presence of Kalinin and Molotov, and two meetings with Molotov which were devoted to political negotiations about questions on our standing programme.

2. With Molotov we discussed in detail and systematically all problems of our joint policy, the post-war situation of Germany and Hungary, the question of the transfer of our German Nazis, our frontiers and our military and economic co-operation with the Soviet Union; then France, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Poland, Austria, the punishment of war criminals—especially, too, how we envisaged the end of hostilities. We spoke in detail about future Slav policy and the conferences at Moscow and Teheran. All these questions were again discussed with Stalin, especially

the problems of future Germany and Hungary, the transfer of our Germans, the Polish question, our frontiers and a number of other things. There is complete unity of views. On Saturday will be the final and conclusive conversation with Stalin.

3. I consider all our negotiations as wholly successful. It can be stated that personally I did not expect that the problems would be posed so clearly, so definitely and with such a prospect of cordial and harmonious co-operation for the future.

4. Progress here in the development of ideas since 1935 and especially since the war is great, real and definite. To imagine that the present outlook towards the Internationale, religion, *co-operation with the West*, Slav policy, etc. is merely tactical would be a fundamental error. The growth of a new Soviet Empire, a decentralised one, with a firm place for the other Soviet Nations in the spirit of a new popular democracy, is undeniably and definitely on the march. A new Soviet Union will come out of the war. Economically and socially it will retain the Soviet system in its entirety but will be quite new politically. It will stand at the head of the Slavs and will exact for itself and therewith for them, too, an entirely new position in the world. The consciousness of victory here is universal. And there is an unalterable determination to be merciless in settling accounts with Germany. For us there is general sympathy. Observers here say that our reception was first-rate and our political position is firm. The treaty is regarded here as the beginning of a new and politically very important phase in our mutual relations—eventually even as a prototype for all Slavs.

5. I handed to the Soviet Government our memoranda on the (minority) transfers, on economic co-operation, on military co-operation and on our questions regarding the cease-fire. These matters will be further discussed here by our Ambassador and our soldiers. In general it can be said that our proposals and our demands will be supported as by an ally. Our frontier problems are understood and it can be expected that Moscow will fully support us in this respect as our ally.

6. I think it can be regarded as certain that all treaties and agreements not only with us but also with the British and with America will be kept. Fulfilment of the promises made to the Anglo-Saxons in Moscow and Teheran will be regarded here as a matter about which there can be no doubt. Furthermore, the Soviet Union already feels itself to be an equal in the world, is proud of its rôle and position and will not want to lose it again.

7. Throughout our discussions there was not a single occasion on which our partners did not stress that whatever question might arise they are not

concerned with our internal affairs and that they would not interfere in them.

8. I have had long discussions with our Communist deputies and after a detailed exchange of views on the past, present and future of the Republic, *there is general agreement between us about what should be done in the immediate future, at the time of transition at home after the fall of Germany and about the procedure for establishing a single national front at home immediately after the revolution.* Discussions about these questions are still continuing.

Especially important were the talks with Marshal Stalin and officials of the Commissariat for War about our Army on Soviet territory, its future, its extension and its reorganisation, and also about supplying us when Germany fell with arms and equipment for the speedy formation of our new Army at home and about the future military co-operation between our two States after the war ended. All the measures agreed upon at that time, especially about our Army on Soviet territory, were afterwards gradually carried out while the war was in progress.

We also discussed quite frankly—with Stalin at the Kremlin in the presence of Molotov—the eventuality of the Red Army entering our territory. I expressed the wish that we should agree clearly on these matters in good time. I expected—though the Soviet armies were at that time only in Rostov and in front of Kiev—that they would soon enter Polish territory, that they would advance westwards and also enter our own country. I therefore asked that, when this happened, our own military units should always enter our territory with the Red Army; *that the occupation of our territory should always be left to us provided our numbers were sufficient, that our internal order should be respected and that our territory should be progressively handed over to our own civil administration.*

Marshal Stalin unhesitatingly accepted this view and confirmed it to me. He declared that the Soviet Union had no intention of proceeding otherwise in our regard, that the measures concerning our military units would be prepared and that at the proper time all military and political preparations and steps to put them into operation could be arranged with our Government and with our Military Mission in Moscow. As I shall show, this more detailed agreement was in fact concluded later. It was signed in London on May 8th, 1944, at our request and on our proposition as an amendment to our treaty with Moscow.

The question of Poland was discussed several times in Moscow following the full discussions I had already had on this subject with Korneytchuk during our journey to Moscow.

The most detailed discussion took place during our joint official visit to

the 'Great Theatre' in the presence of Stalin, Kalinin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Korneytchuk, Fierlinger and Smutný. There was a lovely performance of *Snegurotchka* and in the long intervals and after the end of the performance, deep into the night we discussed the Polish problems in a salon behind the Government box. The Soviet politicians wanted to know my opinion about the state of the London Poles, about the British and American attitude, on whether any agreement with the London Poles was possible, etc.

I told them sincerely what I knew and what I believed. But I stressed two points, firstly that we Czechoslovaks sincerely hoped that an agreement between Moscow and Warsaw would in any case be brought about. It was we in Czechoslovakia who were the first to suffer from any quarrels between them—this had been the case for the whole twenty years after the first World War and it had contributed to Munich—which was why I insisted upon the 'Polish clause' in our treaty. Secondly, that I would always believe agreement was possible with the present Polish Government in London—at least with some of its leading representatives even if with others this seemed quite hopeless. Those who were followers of Pilsudski —and among the London Poles they had a decisive majority—would never come to an agreement with Moscow. But Prime Minister Mikolajczyk and some others were in my opinion sincere democrats and were perhaps convinced that agreement and co-operation with Moscow after the war were necessary for Poland. I therefore urged that Moscow should try once more.

And I again repeated to them, as I had already done to Korneytchuk during our journey to Moscow, my last talk with Mikolajczyk at Aston Abbotts before I left for Moscow. Mikolajczyk knew that I was going to Moscow and had himself asked to see me to explain his attitude as Polish Premier in regard to the Polish-Soviet dispute. He no longer advocated the views which General Sikorski had advocated. He recognised that the Poles would have to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union and that they would have to make great concessions in the matter of frontiers. He was only interested in keeping Lwow and a part of Eastern Galicia and in the non-interference of the Soviet Union in Polish internal affairs. He wanted to do all he could to renew relations with the Soviet Union and he was ready to go again to Moscow. He authorised me to inform official circles in Moscow accordingly.

I and my two collaborators who were present—Fierlinger and Smutný —were favourably impressed about this conversation with our hosts at the Great Theatre. In general the views of the Soviets were to the point, calm

and sincere. As Stalin expressed it, they really wanted an independent and strong Poland. But they did not forget the twenty years of Polish policy after the first World War and they did not want this repeated. It seemed to me that my exposé had interested and, perhaps, influenced them. I advocated that Moscow should agree to the eventual renewal of diplomatic relations with the Polish Government in London which had been interrupted after the Katyn incident*; that Moscow should explain clearly its whole policy towards Poland, Germany and ourselves; that Moscow should give the Poles the same assurances as it had to us—that it would not interfere in Polish internal affairs and that it should make another sincere attempt to reach an agreement.

Before we left the theatre, Stalin summed up the specific points in our conversation and clearly formulated the Soviet attitude to me in regard to Poland. When I asked whether I could pass this information to Mikolajczyk as the official view of Moscow, he agreed.

Perhaps it will be best if I end my account of my Moscow conversations about Poland with a brief postcript. When I was on my way back from Moscow, I received at Cairo, and again at Algiers, an invitation from Churchill to visit Marrakesh where the British Prime Minister was staying to recuperate after his recent rather grave illness. He wanted to know the results of my visit to Moscow and he was especially interested in the Polish question, telling me that agreement had to be reached at the earliest possible moment if Allied policy as a whole was not to suffer and if above all the Poles themselves were to avoid the worst consequences. He also wanted to discuss with me the question of Yugoslavia where the crisis had reached its climax.† My visit to Churchill at Marrakesh took place on January 4th and 5th, 1944.

I told him about my negotiations and impressions and about my views on Polish-Soviet relations. His reaction was very strong and decided. He felt that the Poles should accept what I was bringing Mikolajczyk from Moscow; that when I reached London I should first tell Eden and then

*This concerned the discovery, while the Germans occupied the area, of the mass graves of a number of Polish soldiers. According to the Polish Government in London, the dead soldiers had been missing since the Soviet Government took over this part of Poland after the country had been partitioned between Germany and the U.S.S.R. in October, 1939. According to the Soviet Government, the men had been murdered by the Germans and it broke off diplomatic relations with the Polish Government in London when the latter refused to accept this explanation. A proposal that the Red Cross should investigate the matter was rejected by the Soviet Government (Tr.).

†As between Marshal Tito and the supporters of the exiled Government in London under King Peter (Tr.).

Mikolajczyk, and that then in conjunction with Eden I should urge the Poles as their friend to decide at once to negotiate with Moscow and to accept Stalin's offer.

I arrived in London on January 6th, 1944. On January 8th in the presence of Jan Masaryk I discussed the whole matter with Eden who was of the same opinion as Churchill and I invited Mikolajczyk to come to Aston Abbotts on January 10th. There I summarised my impressions and information from Moscow and the Soviet attitude to Polish matters as formulated to me by Stalin as follows:

(*a*) Moscow did not exclude negotiations with the new Polish Government in London and would be ready to establish diplomatic relations with it at once. But the present Polish Government would have to be reconstructed and old points at issue (Katyn, systematic hostile propaganda against the Soviet Union, etc.) would have to be dropped. Moscow was willing to negotiate with Mikolajczyk if he cared to form a new Government, from which unsuitable elements were excluded, and if he would negotiate with Moscow in this spirit.

(*b*) Moscow could not give way about the Curzon Line but was ready to consent to territorial compensations for Poland at the expense of Germany in full agreement with Poland, Great Britain and America—Moscow would accept any western line upon which they agreed even if it were the Oder line.

(*c*) The Eastern frontier of Poland could be moved from the line on which the Soviet Union had agreed with Germany in 1939, to a 'corrected' Curzon Line—that is to say Lomza, Bialystok and Przemysl would evidently fall to Poland.

(*d*) The Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty was the basis for both countries of their eventual agreement with Poland and also of any future joint guarantee for Poland against Germany. Both countries would loyally work for the conclusion of a tripartite treaty.

(*e*) The Soviet Union had no thought either of procuring a revolution in Germany or of siding with Germany against the other Allies. In this matter, it would go forward jointly with Great Britain and America, and, of course, also with Czechoslovakia and Poland, and was ready to accept the policy of the territorial weakening of Germany.

(*f*) The Soviet Union would not interfere in Polish internal affairs and there would be no Bolshevisation and no Sovietisation.

I felt at the time that my remarks had made a strong impression on Mikolajczyk. It seemed to me that till then no one had been so outspoken to the Poles about these matters. On the same occasion I told Mikolajczyk

what had been said about our affairs in Moscow and to what extent I considered Soviet policy towards us to have definitely crystallised:

(*a*) Our pre-Munich frontiers—corrected perhaps in some small details—were considered a matter of course in Moscow.*

(*b*) Czechoslovakia would be a neighbour of the Soviet Union.

(*c*) We would pursue a uniform or similar policy towards Germany.

(*d*) The proposal to transfer our Germans had been accepted by Moscow.

(*e*) We would also pursue a uniform or similar line of policy towards Hungary.

(*f*) The Soviet Government had promised me help in the occupation of our territory and the equipment of our Army.

This conversation with Mikolajczyk was very friendly and frank. Mikolajczyk answered quite openly that he feared he would not be able to persuade the Poles to accept the new Polish-Soviet Eastern frontier. If Lwow at least could be saved for Poland! He said he knew the Poles. Even if they made matters still worse for Poland, nobody perhaps could get them to yield voluntarily about the Curzon Line. If only it were possible to shift the Polish-Soviet frontier line further to the East and to combine this with an exchange of populations!

He said that nevertheless he would consider all I had told him and would discuss it with his friends. He personally had a fairly strong position politically. Four parties were wholly with him, in England and at home. *Everything* I had told him *would be regarded as satisfactory and as an acceptable basis for agreement except the question of the Eastern frontier*—as I had put it to him. *This difficulty could probably not be overcome.* The growth of a desire among the Poles for agreement with the Soviet Union was already quite considerable, there was also at present more confidence in the Soviet Union and it was especially recognised *that in the interest of Poland itself an agreement should be concluded as soon as possible.* He himself was decidedly in favour of an agreement.

I told him that I had seen Churchill at Marrakesh, that he had urged me to speak to Mikolajczyk and tell him that Churchill thought this was the last chance for an agreement. I had therefore delivered this message and added that Churchill thought the Poles should accept the offer I had brought them. He had asked that Mikolajczyk should perhaps visit Churchill as soon as possible so that they could agree on the next step.

*This involved Poland's giving up Tešin and other places which it occupied at the time of Munich (Tr.).

Finally, Mikolajczyk asked me whether I considered the Soviet Union to be full of vigour or exhausted and whether I thought that it would keep up its offensive. I assured him that the offensive would continue and that to count on the exhaustion of the Soviet Union would be a most unwarrantable assumption. He told me that he thought so too. He rejected the whole well-known ideology of some Polish officers concerning the present-day Soviet Union and Poland and he was working to ensure that Polish feudalism should fall utterly. He added that in Poland itself feudalism had in reality fallen already and social and economic radicalism were much more advanced in Poland than in the emigration. The new Poland would also be quite different, completely changed in fact from the Poland of Pilsudski and Beck.

I emphasised again that I did not want to interfere in Polish affairs and that I had simply delivered my report as I had promised him I would do before I left for Moscow. I was not intervening between them and the Soviet Union—they would have to find a solution themselves. I was only giving information about what I had seen and heard and I was only trying to contribute to a rapprochement. *But I was not acting as a mediator* and I repeated that I did not want to interfere in their affairs and any agreement would have to be their own work and only theirs.[15]

I had the impression that Mikolajczyk was convinced of the necessity for immediate negotiations. But it was clear to me that he did not believe he would be able to overcome the objections of the London emigrants and force them to negotiate.

5. *Discussions in Moscow with our Political Emigrants about the Revolution at Home*

The account of my visit to Moscow in December, 1943, must include a report of my negotiations with our Communists who were living at Moscow.

I was in Moscow for two weeks and the second week was dedicated to conversations and discussions with the Czechoslovak political elements there. Chief among them were: Klement Gottwald, Jan Šverma, Václav Kopecký, Professor Zdeněk Nejedlý, Rudolf Slánský, Dr. Bedřich Vrbenský and some others. We met four times in the house which had been placed by the Soviet Government at my disposal for the period of my stay in Moscow. The Moscow group was represented at these talks, which were very friendly, by Deputies Gottwald, Rudolf Slánský, Jan Šverma and Václav Kopecký.

My plan for the discussions with our Moscow emigrants involved describing to them with complete frankness our conditions in the West, telling them what political, diplomatic and military difficulties and successes we had had there, to what extent we had been in contact with the people at home during the war and what our plans were for the future. Similarly I wanted to know in detail what were the views and plans of those in the East.

All our conversations took place on these lines.

(*a*) In particular, I informed our Moscow politicians in detail about the state of our activity, about the political attitude of our western emigrants and of course about the whole situation of our Government;

(*b*) I was ready to answer all their questions arising out of this statement, to clear up any misunderstandings there might have been between London and Moscow and to invite the Moscow emigrants to take a direct share in our work by sending two delegates to our London Government;

(*c*) I wanted to discuss thoroughly what would happen at home, what questions would arise there in the moment of the revolution and to settle a uniform procedure for the final anti-German revolution at home and for our internal policy during the first phase after our Republic had been liberated.

In my accounts of the situation of our Government and of the emigration in the West, I stressed all the circumstances and difficulties with which we had to contend in Paris, London and in America immediately after Munich. I explained the steps we had taken during the negotiations for the recognition of the Government, our difficulties in organising the Army, our contact with our people at home, with Dr. Hácha and the Protectorate Government and our view of conditions at home in general both in the Czech provinces and Slovakia. Finally I explained how the competent authorities in Great Britain and America saw the future course of military and political events—here I mentioned my visit to the United States—and what conclusions I drew for *our* policy and what the full result of the allied war effort would be *from our standpoint.*

In the second part of my explanation I referred to certain differences in procedure as between London and Moscow, our more moderate line in London and the great radicalism of the Moscow group in estimating conditions at home as well as general differences in tactics as between London and Moscow—especially differences in the radio propaganda to our people at home. I did not consider these differences as a grave deficiency or mistake. I simply regarded them as natural—an inevitable result

of the differences of environment in West and East. I also explained the way our various groups and political parties co-operated in London and I stressed the fundamental accord and general harmony between Communists and non-Communists in the work of our Western emigration.

I ended with a request that those in Moscow should co-operate directly with us in the London Government and should instruct their London comrades accordingly. Before I left London I had secured the approval of the Government and the Czechoslovak emigration for this step—and also the approval of the British Government which I had informed of my intention. And I suggested that all conceivable difficulties had already been disposed of so that there were now no obstacles from the London end.

Those living in Moscow had a number of questions to put regarding my exposé. This served to clear the ground and to remove obscurities and some misunderstandings. The most important discussion arose about the third point : future developments at home, how the revolution was to be carried out especially against the Germans and what our internal policy was to be after liberation. Klement Gottwald thereupon opened the discussion with a long discourse depicting in detail the standpoint of our people in Moscow.*

He emphasised that they held that this war could not end in the same way as the war of 1914-1918. We would have to fight, we would have to carry out a real revolution together with all our people against the Germans as well as against our war criminals at home. I replied that in general we did not greatly disagree with this conception of the end of the war. It was a matter of course that, after what had happened in our country, this war could only end in such a way. And we in London were already making our preparations in this sense. In all our contacts with our country we had this object in view. In addition I had been speaking on these lines publicly for a long time already in my broadcasts from London and I had been sending confidential reports to our country about this subject for many years. So we all were agreed on this main point.

Gottwald then explained his idea of the procedure to be followed in preparing for this revolution. He stressed the necessity of forming national committees which would have to be used not only for the organisation of revolutionary cells for the insurrection itself but also as the basis for the whole revolutionary civil administration. I did not oppose this conception. I explained that it was essential to think it well over and to formulate it on correct lines, that a similar peace-time administration had existed in Great

*i.e. Of the Soviet Government. (Tr.).

Britain since long before the war,* that a democratic administrative organisation of this type had already been discussed in our country in 1848 and again in 1918. The introduction of these ideas after the last war, however, had been prevented chiefly by the existence of the minorities: the Germans and Magyars.

We finished these discussions in agreement that if the question of National Committees were well considered and put before the public in the right way, there would be no rooted objections in our country. My final comment was that the most important consideration would be *to prevent legal and administrative chaos and to replace the previous legal order quickly by a new post-revolutionary legal order.*

Deputy Gottwald next asked what the party structure in our country would be after the revolution. He took it for granted that there would be a great revolutionary shift to the Left, a clear Socialist majority and an overwhelming defeat of our former pre-war Right-wing bloc (Agrarians, National Democrats and Traders). Our Moscow Communists also appeared to regard co-operation of the three Socialist parties with the Šrámek Party as acceptable. In December, 1943, our Communists did not commit themselves definitely on the future existence of the Agrarian Party. All of us without exception regarded the ruthless liquidation of all Fascism as a matter of course.

I put the question of the possibility of merging all Socialist workers' parties; but this matter was left in the air. When I asked whether the Communists would aim at a merger of all the Socialist Parties and would eventually renounce the independence of their own Party, they replied that at that date—December, 1943—they could not yet answer such a question. I drew the conclusion that the Communists would certainly not renounce their independence and I therefore inferred that the Social

*The National Committees (Národní Výbory) as originally conceived and actually introduced into Czechoslovakia after the war were elected in every commune, town and Province on a system of proportional representation. After the Communist coup d'état in February, 1948, they were remodelled and given wide judicial and administrative powers to enable them to enforce Communist economic, social and political regulations entrusted to them by the Government. The members, though 'elected' were first nominated by the Communist Party and no opposition candidates were allowed to stand. During the war, of course, the National Committees were also nominated and though other political parties were represented, the Communists, through their better organisation, often secured an undue proportion of the executive posts. In the borderland, this state of affairs tended to persist after the war, but elsewhere the other parties were able to establish a proper balance and to keep it until the *coup d'état*. (Tr.).

Democratic Party would also remain.* During this discussion the question of the *National Front* was mentioned for the first time. It was declared to be necessary that the Government Parties should form a united national front after liberation, that they should jointly prepare a single post-revolution programme and that they should jointly undertake to fulfil it. I also agreed to the plan for the National Front on this occasion.

Then came the question of elections. I advocated the view that they should be prepared and held within six months after the end of the war. To this there were no objections. Then it was asked how the first Government would be formed—in practice, this meant *who* would be Prime Minister. Klement Gottwald demanded that the first Prime Minister should be from the Left as it could be taken for granted that after the revolution there would be a shift to the Left. After the elections this question would solve itself: it would be the representative of that Party of the Left which emerged strongest from the elections who would become Prime Minister. To this I had no objections. Besides these questions, we touched a number of others, most of them only tentatively: the question of the further development of gymnastic organisations,† the question of punishing war criminals and subversive elements acting against the patriotic anti-German home front, various financial questions, etc.

Finally we arrived at matters in regard to which unity of views between us was not so easy or complete. Above all our Moscow friends doubted whether we in London—and I personally—had not gone farther than we should have done in our contacts with the home country, with Dr. Hácha and the Protectorate Government. As I at once realised, they were asking themselves, and cross-examining me, about whether we had not thus assumed some obligations for the future. I tried to convince them that our behaviour had been correct, that we retained our full liberty of action, that we had no secret obligations to anyone—in accordance with the general principle upon which I had acted in every question throughout the war. *But I was not quite sure whether I had fully succeeded.* It seemed to me that doubts and suspicion remained.‡

*A few months later, the Communists absorbed the much larger Social Democratic Party of Slovakia, thus clearly showing that a 'merger' was only acceptable from the Communist standpoint if it left their own independence unimpaired. (Tr.).

†In Czechoslovakia, gymnastic organisations were patriotic and political bodies too (Tr.).

‡The Communists in exile boasted later of the underground organisation they themselves had built up in Czechoslovakia during the war and it was evident that they wanted as far as possible to have the field clear for themselves. (Tr.).

Various questions and objections arose over my request that the Communists should now enter the London Government. They did not put themselves on record as opposing the London Government and gave general approval to what their Communist friends were doing in the London State Council but they hinted that if they were to become members of the London Government at once, this Government would have to undergo *total* reconstruction. They therefore put the direct question: was the situation in London such that I desired or could proceed with a reconstruction of this kind? They clearly did not believe that it was. I confirmed their doubts. We then agreed that in these circumstances they would not enter the Government, that their Communist friends in London would continue to co-operate in the State Council and would also support the Government politically as before but that the question of their direct participation in the Government itself would be left over for future consideration.

Lastly, came the questions about which there was a direct conflict of views which still remained even after our discussions. The men in Moscow objected to what I had done in 1938 in two respects: firstly, they said I should not have resigned the Presidency, and secondly, that we should not have 'capitulated' but should have gone to war in any circumstances.

I explained in detail all the reasons for my actions at that time: the situation into which we had been brought by Great Britain and France, the line the Soviet Union had chosen to take, the open hostile behaviour of Poland in agreement with the Hungarians, the direct threat to Czechoslovakia, confirmed in writing, from Great Britain and France concerning their attitude if we went to war in spite of their warning. I also explained what our internal position had been at that time and the attitude of the parties comprising the Government coalition: the preparations for open treason by some elements in the homeland and my serious doubts about the attitude of some of our Agrarians, our Ludáks* and our Germans as a whole—finally some of our military weaknesses such as lack of fortifications on our Austrian frontier, infiltration or penetration by not entirely reliable Germans into the rank and file and Staff of our Army, etc., etc.

Above all: the inevitable and forseeable international complications for the Soviet Union[16] as well as ourselves if we had gone to war against the express wish of Great Britain and France!

I ended by declaring that I had done my utmost that we should be able to fight: we had mobilised twice, we had put nearly the whole Nation on

*Members of the Ludová Strana (People's Party)—an extreme Right-Wing Separatist Party in Slovakia formed by Father Hlinka. (Tr.).

a war footing and in September, 1938, we were ready up to the last moment to plunge into war . . . Could more have been done on our side? . . . 'In the conditions which ultimately developed I finally came to the conclusion, according to my conscience and my common sense, that there was no other solution or way out than the solution for which I decided. Of all possible evils, it was the least bad and only by adopting this course did we have the possibility to prepare morally and materially for the event (i.e. the war) with which I had to reckon already in 1938 as a possibility.'

After thus concluding my reasons for acting as I did, I added:

'Besides, what is happening today has fully justified my point of view. You will see that our Nation will hold out better compared with other nations, that it will continue its anti-German resistance and that it will survive the war better than anybody could have imagined—and with comparatively speaking smaller losses.'

Our Moscow politicians disputed my views very hotly and stressed especially that no such conclusions could be drawn before the end of the war. Only when Germany collapsed would we see what havoc the Germans had caused our people in property as well as in lives! 'And then'—added Gottwald—'only consider what evil *moral* consequences Munich has had for our people. It made even March 15th possible! And what else might have happened to Czechoslovakia! It is only by accident that all these catastrophes have not yet fallen on us. That they have not done so, *is no thanks to us!* But above all: we must still wait to see what the final outcome will be! We will have to wait and see!'

I agreed with Deputy Gottwald that in 1943, when the war was raging in all its fury, one could not assume that its end would be advantageous to us. It was therefore necessary to weigh the events to see whether from the end of 1943 they turned out as advantageously for us in comparison with others as I expected and as they had proved till then. Nor did I underestimate in the slightest the moral influence of what had happened in September, 1938, and in March, 1939, and I admitted also that I took the effect of this on the spirit of the Nation into my calculations.

With regard to his second point—what might have happened in our country and his assertion that we could not claim credit for its not having happened—*I retorted by asking the much more justifiable question: what would have happened if in 1938 in our dreadful plight and isolated from nearly all the world we had gone to war!* And I added that indeed *I claimed the merit of having foreseen in 1938 that certain things would happen and that other things would not*—as can be clearly seen from some of my speeches as well as from some of my actions at that period. Because to *pursue the correct policy means*

also to forecast events correctly—gouverner c'est prévoir ! And that is what had happened in our case !

In December, 1943, *each of us held firmly to his own opinion* in these disputed questions. We left the decision *partly to the march of events, partly to the judgment of history* in so far as this was, will and can be a matter of impartial history.

In general, even in these discussions of domestic affairs we also did a great piece of work—good and successful work. On the whole, I was satisfied. I realised at once that in spite of some very important differences it would be possible for our national camp to reach agreement at critical moments about the fundamental problems of our post-war policy. And above all, I did not rule out *the possibility of avoiding civil war at home.*

When I left Moscow, Ambassador Fierlinger accompanied me to Teheran. He told me that our Moscow politicians had agreed that our conferences had taken a satisfactory course and that results had been reached which they themselves had not expected.

So I was full of hope that what happened a year later to the Poles and Yugoslavs would not happen to our movement.

6. *The Soviet Revolution and the Second World War*

I have already mentioned that at the end of 1943 my journey and our treaty were a political event of importance in the framework of the second World War and in a certain sense even a sensation. Though the Soviet Union had already been winning immense military victories for nearly a year, the current opinion among the Allies about the Soviet Union was still reserved. Indeed with many of its opponents its great and unexpected victories over Germany even renewed and strengthened their former apprehensions which were used by German propaganda in an unprecedented—*and successful*—manner.

Our treaty—the first of this kind during the war—made at least a partial breach in this wall between the Soviet Union and the Western world which regarded our action as a kind of experiment—a 'test case' which would show what the Soviet Union intended to do with its smaller neighbours after the war. At first there were rather vehement polemics. Conservative circles in England and America and to some extent elsewhere, Catholics all over the world, the Poles and, of course, the Germans and Hungarians too pounced upon us. Our policy passed through a somewhat difficult phase and it was necessary to explain, react, make statements and to counter-attack on all sides. It was not easy but in the end we convinced all people of goodwill, especially when it was proved, very

soon, that the reverse policy adopted by the Poles led first to great complications among the Allies themselves and soon afterwards to the great discomfiture of the Poles ending with the collapse of the whole Polish war emigration movement in the West.

The problem was always one and the same. The Soviet revolution was a great turning point in Liberal society, which in its main characteristics still continued in the rest of the world though in far more advanced forms than in old Russia. The prejudices against the new revolutionary regime in the Soviet Union and, from a purely Western point of view, the understandable objections to the Soviet system were not removed by the second World War. The fear of social revolution after a new war which had led the Western world to 'appeasement' in 1937–1938 was in some places actually strengthened by the events of the war and by the Soviet victories. And German propaganda knew very well how to use this fear even if 'à la longue' its extremely unintelligent procedure in this regard made it appear ridiculous in the eyes of all sensible people. There remained, of course, the fundamental question: *what would be the relationship between West and East when the war ended ? And what influence would this have on us ?* Naturally, for us, what happened to Germany would always be decisive in this matter because we are not merely between the West and the East. Above all we must remain neighbours of the Soviet Union and Germany.

In our policy towards the Soviet Union—though the larger public of the Allies only took notice of it a whole year after the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Pact—we were still the only pioneers of *systematic and definite co-operation between Western* and Eastern Europe and we had to bear all the unpleasant consequences of this fact. It was not always easy. And so after my return from Moscow our whole policy, our propaganda, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Masaryk, and Minister Ripka, who were in charge of our information service, were for a number of months occupied in Great Britain and America chiefly with efforts to neutralise and overcome these difficulties. It must be confessed that a certain mutual distrust never completely vanished. It was also clear *to us* that post-war co-operation would depend on the reasonableness of *both* sides. In this too we had no illusions.

I also devoted myself to this task as I emphasised what I had seen in the Soviet Union and I spoke about the development of the Soviet Union in and after the war to people in Great Britain and in the United States. I stressed that many things which were being described as Soviet achievements at the end of 1943, I had already seen on my journey to Moscow in 1935. This was why I had marched with the Soviet Union against Nazism until 1938 and why I had believed in the Soviet Union in the second

World War and had never doubted its strength. Even if I had expected the war to take a different course in some details, especially in the West, and had accordingly decided in favour of a different political plan, I was convinced that the Soviet Union would ultimately be on the winning side. On this particular point I had never hesitated and had guided our liberation struggle in the second World War from this standpoint. My second journey to Moscow had confirmed the facts and the truth to me to an extent which in some directions had perhaps even exceeded my expectations.

The development of the Soviet Union and the effects of this development since 1935 made that country quickly accommodate itself to the new conditions of internal and international life which under the influence of the war and of wartime requirements proceeded at a much quicker pace than could have been expected. After my return from Moscow I described the situation of the Soviet Union in the following summary written in 1943:

(*a*) The Soviet revolution can be called a victorious revolution. The Soviet regime is solid and even if it continues to develop as every regime does, it is a regime which has definitely won its fight against Old Russia and is now establishing itself. It has won in the domestic sphere because it did not collapse even in the most cruel war which has ever been waged by any State against any country. It has won internationally because it has definitely established its new international position by its great prowess and successes. It has become the recognised and militarily powerful ally of the greatest empires of the world after defeating attempts to isolate it and it is preparing to play its great rôle in the world together with its Allies and other countries.

(*b*) It is conscious and proud of its victory in the war and proud of the part it has played and will continue to play till the end of the war in the struggle for the freedom of Europe and for the saving of democracy from Nazism. It regards itself as an equal of the other Great World Powers, claims recognition of this equality from the others and wants to maintain this equality, this mutual esteem and co-operation with the others in the future.

In organising its war effort it has equalled the ablest and has surpassed them in some respects. The Red Army was the first to defeat the German army machine on the land.* It has overcome all the difficulties of the notorious communications problem of the Soviet Union which hitherto have nearly always been insurmountable in time of war. It has overcome

*Dr. Beneš has overlooked Alamein which preceded the Soviet Union's first victory—at Stalingrad (Tr.).

all the dangerous difficulties in supplies of all kinds and is already out of all danger in this field. The Soviet war industry has worked almost faultlessly and with full success.

(*c*) Some changes in the Soviet Union which astonished the world recently were the natural outcome partly of the war, partly of developments already accomplished, partly of the changes in its whole position in the world. The dissolution of the Communist International, the new attitude to the Orthodox Church and to religion in general, the incredibly alive and deep cultural, artistic and literary life at Moscow and in other centres of the Soviet Union even during the war (in spite of its being State-directed), its profound Soviet patriotism and new national feeling, its favourable consideration of the so-called Slav policy—that is to say the understanding that German imperialism, directed in the first instance against the Slavonic nations, must be destroyed now, at once and for all time and that the Slavonic nations must be liberated and defended in future against a new German imperialist expansionism[18]—*all this was not a mere game, not mere tactics and not merely the opportunist use of tactics which might perhaps be discarded again after the war.*

Such was the new internal and international situation of a State which had emerged from isolation, fought its way through to the recognition of the new position in the world which belonged to it and was conscious not only of its new strength and power but also of its new international responsibility for Europe and the world and their peace. This was the natural and logical evolution of a great world State the international position of which had entirely changed through the final victory of its revolution which had once been so frowned upon. It had thereby acquired new tasks, new duties and new aims, no longer revolutionary and Soviet ones only. It simply began to use new ways, new methods and new political means which secured for it this new position in the world. *I do not think that this development has already wholly ended today.**

Some people saw in this new policy merely a return to the way other States normally acted. Others declared that the change was in those who had formerly opposed the Soviet Union. They therefore regarded the new attitude of the Soviet Union to this question or that as quite natural. I myself saw it as the natural attitude and development of victorious revolution progressing simply according to its laws—a development which was sociologically quite comprehensible. I had been convinced of this before and I believed it to be implicit in the very substance of Soviet doctrine. Therefore, from 1922 onwards, and really from the end of the first world

*1947 (Tr.).

war, I had tried to bring about a rapprochement and gradual settlement between Europe and the Soviet Union. Today I still think, perhaps more strongly than formerly, that if this had been understood in time on both sides there might not have been a second World War. *Moreover, the Soviet Union itself had substantially changed from the time when it first came into being* and it would be forced to go on changing in future because the main question for the Soviet Union, too, would be: how to keep its new world position permanently? It naturally demands understanding and tolerance from those who criticise its régime and methods. *But it is equally natural that in its own criticisms of the other regimes and their methods it must show the same understanding and tolerance. Full and definite recognition and respect for the principle that every independent State may go the way which suits it best are the necessary pre-requisites for all peaceful co-operation in the world. Otherwise the whole course of events will lead to another war and to a much more dreadful war than its predecessor.* Do we want this or not?

(*d*) The Soviet Union and the Soviet people were great not only because of the historically important results they had been able to achieve for themselves and the rest of the world in the course of their great national Patriotic War and in their national revolution as a whole, but above all on account of what they suffered in this dreadful war.* There is perhaps no Nation which could have borne its sufferings as the Soviet Union did. Its losses in men and property have been without doubt the greatest among the warring Nations.

On my journey I passed a great number of ruins of Soviet towns and villages, destroyed houses, demolished hamlets, railway lines and stations, bridges and roads. I passed endless dumps of destroyed German tanks, motor-cars, planes, railway-wagons and of weapons of all kinds. One beautiful bright night I went through Stalingrad and saw the incredible destruction wrought by the Germans: demolished houses of which only the four main walls were left pointing to heaven like dreadful and warning fingers and appearing even more sinister at night than such ruins do by day. The chairman of the town soviet told me in detail how, not far away near the Volga River, he had buried in one single grave thousands of Germans who had been killed and deservedly punished by the Red Army in a pitiful condition of incredible demoralisation. He had had them carried there on lorries like shot deer to be deposited like logs by thousands and tens of thousands in huge, deep pits.

*Dr. Beneš here uses the words 'národní revoluce' instead of 'Sovětská revoluce' and I therefore assume that he was referring to the great war-time upheaval in the U.S.S.R. and not to the Revolution of 1917 (Tr.).

Young heroes of Stalingrad told me incredible details of the defence of their town, of the sufferings of the whole population without distinction, of the unprecedented bestialities which the German soldiers committed against women and children before their merited fate overtook them for ever, of the desperate runnings to and fro and the cries for help of hundreds and thousands of children and old people in the burning streets during the hellish bombardment by German planes up to the moment when the Red Army broke and annihilated the attackers and when in that very town it smashed for ever the wretched and frantic dreams of German Nazism and of the Berchtesgaden Corporal.

And in Moscow I saw proofs in realistic films of the devastations in the Ukraine, on the Dnieper, at Kharkov, at Kiev: everywhere those unheard-of bestialities, masses of killed civilians, old men, women and children, in nearly every liberated town cultural memorials and buildings smashed insanely, uselessly and without military necessity, churches and monasteries destroyed, libraries, universities, hospitals, simple but remembered houses, without respect, without object, without necessity. I almost ceased to believe that the German Army was still composed of human beings. All these things could not be forgotten and for all of them there had to be a reckoning!

These sufferings brought the Soviet Union to its later, and present, realistic concept of post-war policy—to its decision to end all such things, to come to a sincere agreement with the Anglo-Saxons and with everybody who really wanted an agreement and to construct together with us all a new, more just Europe, a new world and a new peace.

I left Moscow with my collaborators on December 23rd, 1943, with feelings of extreme respect and gratitude to the whole Soviet people, to their Army and their leaders. Grateful as I was to the British and Americans for all they had done for us in this war, I was not less grateful to the Soviet Union both for its deeds of prowess in the war and the really friendly and cordial reception given us in Moscow and all over the country; for the favours and recognition which the Soviet Union bestowed with so much sincerity on our soldiers who fought on its front.* And I wished that what I saw and went through at that time—a time which was decisive for the whole future course of the war—might be viewed in the same spirit by our other Allies and friends and that they should orientate their future policy on this basis—for real post-war and peace-time co-operation between the West and the East. *It was, of course, clear to me that even after the war the Soviet Union must continue permanently in the lines of policy on which it had*

*Dr. Beneš was not allowed to visit the front himself (Tr.).

embarked so decidedly during the war and with so much statesmanship and which it was prosecuting so unreservedly. At this point, during my journey back to London, my thoughts continually came back to the question: Are we on the right path or not? Will what I pondered so deeply during all my years in London and what I wrote about in detail in my book *Democracy Today and Tomorrow* really come to pass, namely, a settlement between West and East—a settlement, moreover, which in the future and, above all, in our* own interest, remains *our great political task* for the future?

After my return from Moscow the Western world was intently watching how our relations would develop. Many predicted '*grave disappointments*' in our experience of the part played by the Soviet Union. Many declared in asides and also publicly, that 'Beneš had been in too much of a hurry'. German propaganda, of course, pelted us with fire and brimstone, explained to our people at home that I had sold the country to Stalin and that I had betrayed the Nation again. They founded an anti-Bolshevist league and rounded up the masses of our people with whips and revolvers to take part in demonstrations against Bolshevism into the hands of which I had allegedly sold myself.

But the reports we ourselves received in London were to the effect *that though the majority of our people were not Communists they fully understood and approved our attitude, my journey and the treaty. In short, that they understood the problems which would confront European policy after the war.* They understood that our Government abroad was taking the right course in view of what had happened in 1938 and 1939 and the fact that we would be neighbours of Russia after the war and the Nation at home fully approved the policy of timely agreement with Russia.

7. *Czechoslovakia at the Crossroads between West and East*

These reflections of mine about what would happen after the war and my questions whether the policy I had hitherto defended and advocated so vigorously throughout the war would be fulfilled, namely, the necessity of making the war a joint one and of course also making joint preparations for peace and for a joint peace policy after the war, became the whole basis of all my deliberations and political activity after my return from Moscow.

The question has been put to us and is again being *put today:* Is our national culture Eastern or Western? And what inferences can be drawn from this? Indeed, our conduct during the war sometimes gave the West the impression that we were preparing to change over from our former Western cultural orientation to a so-called Eastern one. I thought and still

*i.e. The interest of Czechoslovakia (Tr.).

think that this question was and is *quite incorrectly formulated. It was not and is not a question of changing our cultural orientation.* The cultural development of a nation is not a value which can be put off and on like a coat, particularly not from one day to the other, one year to the other, or according to some momentary change of political regime. The cultural development of a nation consists of centuries-old values which build themselves up in the course of ages and are imperishable, which are continually developing and which adapt themselves to new cultural facts and values only by slow degrees. Such is the sociological development of every national culture. In that sense it is simply ignorant and unreasonable to speak of a change in our national cultural orientation. Furthermore, in our cultural development one great fact has never ceased to be valid. It still is valid. *We have always taken deliberately a general and universal line.* That is to say a line which includes not only the development and progress of the West, but also the progress and development of the East. Perhaps therefore we will in this or that direction deepen our cultural contact with the East after the war to a somewhat greater extent than in the past, especially during the twenty years preceding the war.

The best proof of this is our constantly recurring relationship to *German* culture: We have always reacted to it—even if this reaction has often been inspired by a purely national sentiment—by deliberately leaning towards French and Anglo-Saxon and also the Russian cultu e. In this way we have instinctively expressed our age-old effort to avoid simply and slavishly imitating cultural and other values of a particular nation and to cultivate instead a general human, an explicitly *universal* culture and progress while clinging passionately and obstinately to our *national* forms. All our great national leaders are clear examples of this tendency.

And so our answer to the question: West or East? is to say deliberately and plainly: *West and East.* In this sense—*and in this sense only*—did I sign and approve the treaty with the Soviet Union of December, 1943, *intentionally and consciously linking it with the Anglo-Soviet treaty of May 26th, 1942.* At the time I firmly believed that this treaty would continue in operation after the war ended. Was I right or wrong?

Today it is not, of course, a question of changing cultures and national orientations. The present revolution is a fundamental and deliberate change of *political and social-economic* regimes. Naturally this deep change will also have certain influences on national and cultural orientations and will affect them in many ways. But in essence the change will be of the kind which I described in my book *Democracy Today and Tomorrow* (pp. 247 *et sqq*). It can be summed up in the question: *Is a transformation of post-*

war democracy actually possible and is it possible for it to coexist and co-operate with the system of Soviet Socialism?

I said that after this dreadful second World War the system of political democracy and the system of Soviet Socialism would both remain—first as allies, *later as rivals*. Could they and would they live side-by-side with one another? Would they co-operate or at least tolerate one another? Or would there be further conflicts between them until one or the other fell (perhaps after an interval which both would need in order to recuperate from their war exhaustions) and would they ultimately come to grips once more in a new and mighty struggle?

Consistent Marxism must of course *theoretically* believe in the final liquidation of the system of bourgeois capitalism. Communism therefore was devoting its efforts *theoretically* to the triumph of classless Socialist society and would continue to do so. Would it also do this *in practice*—after the war, as before it—despite the gigantic changes which the war had brought about? *And would Communism continue to be supported* internationally by the Soviet State in this struggle regardless of what had happened in the present war? *On the answers to these questions would, naturally, depend the actual post-war relations between the Western European democracies and the American democracies on the one side and the Soviet Union on the other.* The signature of the Anglo-Soviet treaty of May 26th, 1942, on co-operation during the war and on post-war co-operation in reconstruction and the maintenance of peace suggested and *held out the promise* that at that time there *really was an intention* and determination to secure friendly and allied co-operation between the two systems for at least twenty years after the conclusion of the peace.[19]

Or was the Anglo-Soviet treaty merely a means of securing mutual aid during the war with the intention of renewing the international social struggle ruthlessly between the systems after victory? There is no doubt that neither party showed this intention—rather that both showed the contrary—before signing the treaty. So are we to return to the pre-war system of murderous struggle between Western Europe and America and the Soviet Union, to mutual boycott and isolation which would culminate in some new catastrophe?

In my book, written in 1944, I continued: 'I myself answer all these questions about our present international situation *in general quite unambiguously. I believe that peaceful co-operation between the two systems is possible and that it is right and necessary. I believe that today, too, and not only in their war effort both systems should co-operate and that they should tolerate one another loyally even after the war.* This would result first in their further temporary

rapprochement and finally perhaps even in a permanent evolutionary equilibrium through adaptation. I base this view partly on *theoretical considerations*, partly on *practical needs*.'

The process of socialisation of society is today* on the march all over the world, in all modern democracies in their present forms! (See for instance what is being done at present in Great Britain!) Not long ago, Great Britain was only limiting various kinds of private ownership and private-capitalist profits. Today it is already putting into operation downright nationalisation and socialisation of all forms of ownership according to Socialist doctrines. Today socialisation formulæ are even incorporated in various forms in new State constitutions. Scientific economic planning is already generally accepted. All this is a great step to the socialisation of modern democratic society and at the same time expressly a great step also towards a compromise with the ideas advocated by Soviet Socialism. Of course, these steps are not an acceptance of the theory of Communism. But the benefit from such a compromise might go in the first instance to world Socialism itself.

'Moreover the principle of State enterprise,† nationalisation and public control of the means of production, of distribution and of private profit, is in some democracies only in its first stages. In others it has progressed far. In some places it is still fighting for general recognition on principle. In others, there is no longer a fight over principles, but only for the degree of practical realisation in this or that direction.

'And here I again put the paramount question: Can the Soviet Socialist system live side by side with the new and transformed democracy which has in essence accepted the principles of nationalisation of the means of production and private profit and which seeks to apply them courageously, reasonably and step-by-step in addition to other so-called Socialistic measures? Yes or no? Again I answer: *Yes!* Here the road is really open. The realisation of this aim depends partly on gradual development, on new political methods and on the degree of maturity of the Society and State concerned.[20] Partly, too, it is a question of experience, of standing the test and of the comparative advantages of a smaller or greater degree and scale of socialisation in modern society.

'It is therefore a question of suitability of the choice of means: what actual position to assume and by what road to travel. It can be the road of violent revolution put through in one blow. It can be by a hurried and more or less violent process which most people would consider exaggerated,

*i.e. in 1947 when Dr. Beneš was writing his Memoirs. (Tr.).

†Dr. Beneš is again quoting from his book (Tr.).

rash, psychologically unsuitable for winning over the majority of the population and likely to raise a counter-revolutionary reaction. But it is also possible to move gradually, on an evolutionary path, empirically and by scientific economic planning, without catastrophes and without violence, by agreement and co-operation.'

I am in favour of this third method, categorically and unconditionally. I am in favour of it also because I am *a real democrat.* I know that in the development of Nations and States there are periods *when violent revolutions are necessary.* But I also know that at certain moments of national history, *attempts to stage a violent revolution may actually amount to a thoroughly bad attempt on the part of reaction.* And as a real democrat I want to exhaust all peaceful ways, all possibilities of agreement and all ways of democratic co-operation. The Communists, too, having already come so far on the way to real power, must understand that they must impose some restraint on themselves, that while they need not retreat anywhere they must have the patience to choose the correct moment for continuing in a reasonable way along the evolutionary road.

I do not want to stage a sectarian debate as to what is and what is not 'revolution'. Slow progress may be sometimes more revolutionary than unreasonable pressure and violence. A. S. Pushkin puts it admirably: 'Remember, young world, that the best and most permanent changes are those which have their origin in a moral improvement without any violent commotion at all.' For me, that is what matters. I am anxious that our State and Nation should build up the best and most lasting social structure. As a practical politician and not as a party-man or sectarian I want to do what is necessary, fitting, advantageous and, above all, what is possible and what is right under existing conditions of society and the country. *I want to do it by the path of evolution, without violence.*

I also believe that in these circumstances new post-war democracy and Soviet Socialism could live one beside the other in an atmosphere of real peace, without rivalry and hostility, in co-operation and mutual agreement. But already in 1944 I added very significantly—anticipating what is manifesting itself on both sides today: 'How this process will develop and end in regard to both these social-political systems, nobody can yet say.' Did I at that time see and foresee the present developments in the East and West correctly or not?

And will events continue to march to a final violent culmination or will both parties cease to boast about their revolutionary strength or their atomic bombs? Will they stop dwelling on the real or alleged weaknesses of their antagonist? Will they return to the statesmanlike policy which

they followed during critical war days and turn the present untoward course of events into a channel which is vital, as well as favourable, for both? If not, then woe, woe betide us all, whoever we are!

On the answer to this fundamental question depends once again the peace and destiny of the whole world—its rational, or violent and unhappy, future.

NOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

[1]The full text of the speech is printed in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 312–41 (Czech edition).

[2]Minister Dr. Ripka informed me of the negotiations and of their result in the following dispatches:

Dispatched May 29th, 1943. Number 186/43
Bogomolov on talks in the U.S.A.
Telegram from Dr. Ripka to President Beneš:

(*a*) After Masaryk had done so, I have also informed Bogomolov today of your conversations in America. Bogomolov received this information with the utmost satisfaction and was visibly delighted at all the references to Russia. He said that he had already been informed about them by the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

(*b*) With regard to the fact that, following the British, the American Government is now also in favour of transfer of the Czechoslovak Germans, I explained to him that we expect the Soviet Government to take the same view and that it was not enough for us to be told that this was our internal concern. Bogomolov told me frankly that, if the Soviet Government had so far hesitated to express itself clearly, this was certainly because the Government had not yet decided what policy it would follow towards Germany. In his opinion this was now maturing . . . and he thought that there would be no difficulties . . . He promised he would make inquiries at once so that the whole matter should be arranged before your arrival in Moscow . . .

RIPKA

Dispatched June 6th, 1943. Number 202/43
Consent of the Soviet Government to the transfer.
For Beneš only:

On Saturday evening, Bogomolov telephoned to me in the country that he had just received a telegram stating that the Soviet Government agreed to the proposal to transfer the Germans. Bogomolov asked me expressly to inform you of this by cable at once.

RIPKA

[3]Was I mistaken in either my opinion or my expectation or was I not? Only the future can answer. Come what may, I was to the fullest possible extent sincere and honest in my belief.

[4]The division of the war zones in Germany and Central Europe was decided between the West and East at this time. Poland and Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary and Yugoslavia were placed in the Soviet Zone. Nobody told us at the time either officially

or unofficially. We only learned about it indirectly, much later, at the time of the Slovak Revolt.*

[5]In my draft, for instance, it was provided that the treaty should be ratified by our Parliament at home in Prague after the end of the war. I had also proposed the treaty should last for five years with the possibility of renewal. These provisions were changed in Moscow already before I arrived. As I did not want to prolong the discussions, I accepted the Moscow draft.†

[6]On the occasion of the signing of the treaty there were speeches by M. Kalinin, President of the Supreme Soviet and myself on behalf of Czechoslovakia.

Kalinin's speech ran as follows:

'MR. PRESIDENT,

'In the name of the Nations of the Soviet Union I welcome you in our capital, Moscow.

'The Treaty of friendship, mutual aid and post-war co-operation concluded today between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Czechoslovak Republic, is an important contribution to our common fight against German Fascism and against any new aggression on the part of Germany.

'The traditional friendship of our Nations, expressed already in the Treaty of mutual aid concluded in Prague on May 16th, 1935, and in the agreement of our two Governments on the joint prosecution of the war against Germany, concluded in London on July 18th, 1941, has now been confirmed by a new treaty which will constitute a very important historic stage in the development of this friendship.

'The strengthening of wartime co-operation between our Nations and all the freedom-loving Nations of the world is a guarantee of success in the struggle to destroy German Fascism and all who are associated with its sanguinary crimes in Europe.

'The hour of revenge approaches for the humiliations, the sufferings, the blood and tears of the Czechoslovak people whose tortures and hardships are near and comprehensible to our people who have felt the full weight of Hitler's invasion. The Russian Nation has organised a powerful resistance to the enemy aad wages war for the complete expulsion of the hated occupants from the whole of Soviet territory.

'It is important to emphasise that the principles of the Treaty for mutual aid in the war against Hitler's Germany are already being carried out. This co-operation has been sealed with the blood of the sons of our Nations who are fighting shoulder to shoulder for our common victory, for the common victory of the cause of the Allies. The Treaty establishes a firm foundation for post-war co-operation between our Nations and for the prevention of any attempts by Germany to return to its old gangster policy of conquests in the East—the *Drang nach Osten*. German imperialism's policy of conquest must be opposed by the Nations of our two countries with all their might.

*Before this revolt began, the British and American military authorities in Italy had accumulated considerable quantities of arms which they were preparing to take to Slovakia by air. The plan, which had been worked out in collaboration with the Czechs, had to be dropped because of objections raised by the U.S.S.R. (See p. 253). (Tr.).

†The Czechoslovak electorate was thus deprived of any opportunity of expressing its views about the Treaty—a fitting commentary on the Soviet interpretation of the word 'democracy' (Tr.).

'Allow me, Mr. President, to congratulate you and your collaborators on the conclusion of this Treaty which for long years is to serve the great future of our Nations.

'I thank you for your efforts which have been so happily crowned by the signing of this Treaty.'

I answered in this short address:

'MR. PRESIDENT, GENTLEMEN,

'I would like to express my feeling of deep satisfaction that we could today sign this Treaty which I consider an act of immense importance in our national history and in the history of the mutual relations between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. This Treaty has crowned the efforts made by Czechoslovakia during the past twenty years to give security to our Nation and our State against German imperialism. Our Treaty is a natural milestone in the course of this war against inhuman and rapacious German chauvinism which has been striving above all to destroy the neighbouring Slav States: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union. This Treaty will be a link in the future organisation,* beneficent alike for us and for all the Allies and it will help to strengthen peace in Europe.

'Allow me, Mr. President, to thank you and all the Soviet political and military elements which have taken part in the realisation of this Treaty. The Treaty, as I have already said yesterday, will be a firm guarantee for Czechoslovakia of a happier future and close political, military, economic and cultural co-operation with the brotherly Nations of the Soviet Union.'

[7]I proposed this wording to show that the Treaty was a continuation of our former policy and the renewal of a treaty which our whole Nation, in a time of freedom, had approved through its constitutional institutions in 1935.

[8]The 'Polish Clause' was drafted as signed by the Soviet Foreign Commissariat.

[9]From this speech, addressed to our country, I quote:

'Above all we will, together with the Soviet Union, wage war against Germany and all its allies until final victory. And if—as the treaty expressly lays down—Germany again renews in the future its present criminal policy of the *Drang nach Osten* and of the so-called German Lebensraum we will again concert together our full and joint defence by war against Germany and its helpers. This German policy of violence must be destroyed once and for all and completely by this war. The Treaty is a clear formulation of the principle that the Soviet Union will never again in the future permit the German *Drang nach Osten*. This has been clearly and firmly stated for the first time and I am convinced that all Europe and the whole world will now realise that this bandit, imperialist, vile, typically Prussian policy of the former German armies of crusaders and knights as well as of the present German Junkers, aristocrats, bureaucrats, generals, capitalist land-grabbers and pan-German Nazis which has lasted for long years—and in a certain sense for whole centuries—that this policy *must end once and for all.*

*I assume this to mean the World Organisation to which Dr. Beneš has already referred several times. It is pertinent to add here that after the war when Czechoslovakia (of which Dr. Beneš was at that time still President) wished to renew its pre-war treaty of alliance with France, the Soviet Union prevented it from doing so. (Tr.).

'Secondly, this Treaty puts on record the joint and permanent friendship which will exist between our Nations in the future, a friendship which immediately after the war will begin by extensive economic co-operation. We here and you at home should already prepare for this co-operation and should make our plans and take practical measures to ensure it.

'This will mean considerable changes in our pre-war trade and industrial orientation. But it will also mean for us a great economic security, a new economic independence especially from Germany and from its future influence. It will be necessary to prepare the reconstruction of our railway, waterway and air communications. This does not mean that we should abandon our connections and economic interests in Western and Southern Europe and in the rest of the world. But it will complete them in an important direction, give us new security and be an expression of the fact that geographically we are in the very heart of Europe and in the immediate proximity and neighbourhood of the Soviet Union which until now has been so neglected by us economically and which itself is and will be so deeply interested in our economy in future.

'Thirdly, the Treaty expressly refers to our future co-operation in every direction as that of *two completely free and independent States*. It fully respects our sovereignty and provides for mutual non-interference in one another's internal affairs. By this, we both wanted to prove as plainly as possible to the whole world that the propaganda of the Germans and our treacherous Czech and Slovak Quislings is both stupid and extremely mendacious. It has already been emphasised during the Moscow Conference of the three Great Powers that these Powers in general and the Soviet Union in particular fully respect the independence of the smaller Nations and States, that they want a strong Czechoslovakia, a strong Poland, a strong Yugoslavia and, of course, also an independent Austria, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland.

'You at home, in Prague, in the Czech provinces and in Slovakia should not heed therefore the slanderous Nazi propaganda which so foolishly proclaims that the Soviet Union wants to devour us. Do not heed this propaganda from the standpoint of internal politics either. Immediately after the war our State will freely establish its political regime with a very limited number of political parties—I, personally, would wish only three. It will be a democratic State—a real People's State. Immediately after the fall of Germany it will have its new Government which will also represent our whole national home front. Only Fascists, Nazis and all treacherous evil-doers of the war period will be excluded from it and from its benefits. These of course must be swallowed up in the abyss of their catastrophe. They will have to atone for all their guilt, their crimes and their treason—just as in all the other liberated countries of Europe.

'Our State will also carry out a number of social and economic changes. It will accept in its policy and in its economy the *system of planning* for which already some of our economists worked before the war. I myself expect and will endeavour to secure that the whole political, economic, and social—and especially also the ethnical—post-war reconstruction of our new State shall be carried out at great speed, chiefly on the basis of the programme of our well-considered and scientifically-prepared *first Five-Year-Plan*.

'I do not want to continue the enumeration of these problems of internal policy—we will tell you about the matter in due course from London and also from Moscow. After my return to London our Government will make all the necessary preparations

the definite execution of which will naturally be decided by our liberated people at home as a free and sovereign Nation.

'And fourthly: this treaty and all that comes out of the war in the way of the co-operation of the Soviet Union with Western Europe, *will once and for all prevent a repetition of Munich*, a repetition of the treason of our Fascists, a repetition of the treason of the Slovak Fascists and of their treacherous separation of Slovakia from the Republic in the interests of barbarian German violence, and it will mean that German Fascism and treacherous and base Henleinism will entirely vanish from our country. *This is one of the chief tasks and aims of the treaty*—I say this plainly and frankly. In other words: what we are now doing here, *is to frame one of the chief safeguards for the whole future existence of a united national Czechoslovak State, a State of the Czechs, Slovaks* and *Sub-carpathian peoples.*★

'As long ago as August, 1942, after the visit which the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Vyatcheslav Molotov paid to London, I informed you in the course of my announcement that the British Government had revoked Munich in a letter to Minister Masaryk dated August 5th, 1942, that Commissar Molotov had assured me that the Soviet Union had never had anything in common with Munich, that it had never recognised any of the consequences of Munich and that therefore—by entering on July 18th, 1941, into the Treaty of alliance with us in the war against Germany—he had recognised, and signed the treaty with, the pre-Munich Republic.

'The same is true today for both our States *and in particular it is true for our new Treaty*. In addition, the Soviet Union sincerely wishes the Czechoslovak Republic to be strong, consolidated, nationally as homogeneous as possible, to be a really good and strong friend and collaborator of the Soviet Nations in the future defence of permanent European peace. It has the same wishes with regard to the future Poland and does not merely desire good and friendly relations with it *but also full Polish-Czechoslovak friendship and co-operation*. This can be seen from the protocol appended to our treaty foreshadowing and desiring that the Treaty should become in the near future a trilateral treaty of the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia.'

The full (Czech) text of this speech was printed in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 223–230 (Czech edition).

[10]The full text of my London speech was printed (in Czech) in my book *Six Years of Exile and the Second World War*, pp. 341–407 (Czech edition).

[11]We were asked a number of times in London whether we were not afraid that we had gone too far and that we had made our independence too dependent upon the Soviet Union. I answered that it was a question of securing ourselves against some future repetition of Munich *and that I firmly hoped we could trust the Soviet Union*. We, at any rate, were really sincere in this expression of our hope and confidence that we could do so was really sincere.

[12]Envoy J. Smutný, General Nižborský (Hasal), Envoy (Jaroslav) Kraus and Dr. Táborský were with me.

[13]My discussion with Stalin was interesting, very frank and sincere. It covered Munich, the Slavs, Communism and the Communists in our country and other questions.

★Towards the end of the war, the Soviet Government insisted on Sub-Carpathian Ukraine becoming a part of the Soviet Union. (Tr.).

[14]The Soviet Ambassador to our Government in London.

[15]In the afternoon of the same day Minister Stanczyk* visited me and we went over the same ground again. Stanczyk insisted even more strongly that there must be an agreement and as soon as possible. It was, he said, high time.

To his direct question as to whether there was no hope of saving Lwow, I told him that according to what I had heard in Moscow, I thought the Soviet Government could not and would not make any concession *with regard to the Ukraine*. It would also want a definite solution with us of the question of Subcarpathian Ruthenia.

[16]At that time I did not go into this question in so much detail and so precisely as I did later in my book *Essays on Slavism*, published in London in 1944,† in which I explained my opinion of our procedure and that of the other nations during the Munich crisis. See this book, p. 243 *et sqq.* and also the note on pp. 248–249 (Czech edition).

[17]I shall give a detailed account of all these problems in the volume of my Memoirs dealing with Munich.

[18]Compare these remarks with what I said in my book *Essays on Slavism*, Czech edition, Prague, 1947.†

[19]See my essay in *Democracy Today and Tomorrow*, p. 250 (Czech edition).

[20]See also my remarks when on accepting the honorary title of Doctor of Law of Charles University in Prague on December 15th, 1945.

*Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Polish Government in London (Tr.).

†The first edition was published in London in 1944 and the second in Prague in 1947. (Tr.).

APPENDIX

President Beneš's Farewell Broadcast to the Czechoslovak Nation on October 5th, 1938, on resigning after Munich.

Dear fellow-citizens,

I have just sent to the Prime Minister a letter in which I resign my presidential office. And I am addressing myself to you to say farewell to you as President, to say farewell to my political colleagues, to our splendid soldiers, to the Legionaries and to all those with whom as President I came into contact and used to work.

I reached my decision of my own free will and in accordance with my personal conviction after consultations with political and constitutional circles and with a number of other leading persons. I intended to take this step immediately after Munich. I postponed it in order to secure first a stronger and more lasting Government. I believe that in present circumstances my decision was right.

I do not intend to analyse the whole political situation which has led me to this step. I want only to emphasise that the whole system of the balance of power in Europe built up after the war has for some years been steadily growing weaker and during the last three years has substantially changed to our disadvantage and the disadvantage of our friends. In agreement with its friends, the Czechoslovak Republic has honestly tried through long years to support this system and to change it gradually by a process of evolution because this was the way its interests lay. At the same time it has always searched frankly and honestly for a possibility of adapting its policy to new developments and of reaching agreement with its neighbours.

During the last three years events have succeeded one another with unexpected speed. We in our country have done our utmost when these events took the form of racial strife. At the same time we have also sincerely tried to reach agreement with the other races. We went to the utmost limit of possible concessions. But influences from abroad and the whole course of European development intensified these matters into a grave international conflict in which it behoved us to look to the defence of our frontiers by military action.

All of us united to do this with energy, devotion and unparalleled self-confidence and our attitude is respected by our enemies as well as friends. But it became evident that a European and world catastrophe would develop. You know that in these circumstances four Great Powers met

and agreed among themselves about the sacrifices which they asked from us in the name of world peace. You know that we were forced to accept these sacrifices.

Today I do not want to discuss these matters in detail nor to criticise them. And you need not expect me to utter a single word of recrimination against anyone. All will be judged in due course by history and history will give a just verdict. I will say only what we all feel most painfully: the sacrifices which we were asked to accept and which were then forced upon us are out of all proportion and are unjust. The Nation will never forget that fact though it is bearing its burden with dignity, calm and confidence which evoke general admiration. In this attitude can be seen the strength of the Nation and the moral greatness of its sons and daughters.

During this period, I have, as my duty demanded, defended with all the devotion of which I was capable the interests of our State and Nation and our present position in Europe. They are mistaken who did not rightly estimate the hundreds of attempts we made to preserve peace, to build up peaceful co-operation, to build up good neighbourly relations—who did not appreciate our real desire to come to an understanding with all around us. But the forces on the other side were stronger. In these circumstances I think it is advisable that the new developments and the new European collaboration should not be disturbed from our side through the fact that the personal position of its leading representative apparently constitutes an obstacle to this development. I was elected to my present position at a time substantially different from the present and I must consider whether I can remain at my post under the changed conditions now obtaining. I am by conviction a democrat. I believe I am acting rightly in leaving so that our State and Nation can develop quietly and undisturbed in the new atmosphere and adapt itself to the new conditions. This means that it should not renounce old friends and should gather new friends around it in a spirit of calm, of realism and of loyalty to all as I have always longed that it should.

Our State has had a special structure from the nationality standpoint. Now conditions will change greatly. Many of the causes of dispute with our neighbours will disappear. We shall have a national State as in one sense the development of the principle of nationality indicates. Herein will lie the great strength of our State and Nation. This will provide the State with a great and new source of activity and a strong moral basis which it has not possessed hitherto. Our national culture will deepen and grow stronger. We are still strong enough, numerous enough. Let us therefore look hopefully towards our national future. The Czechs and Slovaks by

their origin, by their whole education for many generations, may be everything else but they are not a Nation of defeatists. We are a typically sober Nation and, as we did not grow proud in the hour of good fortune, so let us not lose our heads in our misfortune. Heroism of work and of self-denial for which we must now be prepared, are not less grand or less worthy than heroism on the battlefield.

The stem of the tree of our homeland has had some branches lopped from it but the roots of the Nation are still firm in the earth. Let us go back to our roots. Let us concentrate all the old strength of our race in them as we have done so often in our history, and after a while the stem will again put forth new shoots. Let us remember that what remains to us after all these sacrifices is the core of our country, a heritage which we must preserve for future generations, and which still constitutes a possession of eternal value. Remember that even now we remain a State which is not one of the smallest but a Nation with a culture equalling the culture of greater nations and excelling that of many. We have an obligation therefore to safeguard this our great inheritance with a firm and calm hand.

Dear fellow-citizens, friends!

In conclusion I appeal to you all with an earnest, sincere request which comes from my heart: The home of the Czechs and Slovaks is in real danger. It would be in still greater danger if at this moment we did not stand together in unity, concord and in the full moral strength of people who are devoted to one another. It is necessary above all to come to an agreement with the Slovaks. They, too, are in danger. Today it is not this or that concession which is of importance. Give way to one another wherever necessary.

Next, I address myself to all other elements in the population: to farmers, workers, the middle classes and intelligentsia. I say to you: preserve your calmness and concord, your unity, devotion and mutual love to one another, because—as Masaryk used to say—the country, the State and the Nation, are just all of you standing together in your homeland. Drop for the time all your quarrels and your daily petty interests and direct all your efforts to one aim only: united work for your country and State.

Especially warmly I thank our spendid Army. As President, I dedicated all my activities to its well-being. I am with it and I will never forget it. I believe in its successful development and in its future.

I end with the expression of my honest conviction, the expression of my profound belief, in the eternal strength and firmness of our Nation, in its energy, constancy, perseverance and, especially, in its belief in the ideals of humanity, in the ideals of liberty, right and justice, for which it has

fought so often, for which it has suffered so often and with which it has always in the end been victorious. I, too, have fought for these things. And I shall remain true to them. Nor am I leaving the ship because there is a gale. On the contrary, I believe that at this moment my sacrifice is politically necessary. But this does not mean that I shall forget my duty to continue working as a citizen and patriot.

My wish for you all, for the Republic and the Nation, is that it shall soon see better days, that it shall live, grow and flourish again as a beautiful branch of the human race and as one of the noble, comely nations of Europe.

Fare you all well!

Note of the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, delivered to the German Ambassador, Graf v. Schulenburg, a copy of which was sent by the Commissariat to Envoy Fierlinger :

Moscow, March 18th, 1939

MR. AMBASSADOR,

I have the honour to confirm the receipt of your Note of the 16th inst. as well as of your Note of the 17th inst., in which you announce to the Soviet Government the incorporation of Bohemia and Moravia into the German Reich and the establishment of a German protectorate over them.

Not considering it possible to pass over in silence the Notes mentioned above and thereby giving the false impression that it is not interested in the events in Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Government deems it necessary, in reply to the Notes in question, to express its real attitude to the events with which the Notes are concerned.

1. The political-historic concepts mentioned in the introductory part of the German Decree with the object of justifying and defending it, especially the reference to the Czechoslovak State as a source of permanent unrest and danger for European peace, to the lack of vitality of the Czechoslovak State and to the resultant permanent uneasiness arising for Germany, cannot be accepted nor do they correspond to the facts which are known to the whole world. In reality, of all the European States after the world war the Czechoslovak Republic was one of the few in which internal peace and a peace-loving foreign policy had been really secured.

2. The Soviet Government does not know of any State Constitution that would authorise the head of the State to destroy the existence of the State without the consent of the Nation concerned. It can hardly be admitted that any Nation would voluntarily consent to the abolition of its independence and to its incorporation into another State, much less so a Nation which for centuries has fought for its independence and which for twenty years has maintained its independence. The Czechoslovak President Hácha, when signing the Berlin document of the 15th inst., was not authorised to do so by his Nation and acted in clear contradiction of Articles 64 and 65 of the Czechoslovak Constitution and against the will of the Nation. Therefore the document in question cannot be regarded as valid.

3. The principle of self-determination to which the German Government often refers, presumes a free expression of the will of the Nation which cannot be replaced by the signature of one or two persons even if they should fill the highest offices in the State. In the present case there was

no decision by the Czech Nation, not even in the form of plebiscites such as were carried out for example when determining the fate of Upper Silesia and the Saar.

4. Having regard to the fact that there has been no expression of the will of the Czech Nation, the occupation of Bohemia by the German Army and all other actions of the German Government must be characterised as arbitrary, violent and aggressive.

5. All the above remarks apply also to the change of the legal position of Slovakia in the direction of subordination to the German Reich which was not legalised by any decision of the Slovak Nation.

6. The action of the German Government has brought about a violent invasion by the Hungarian Army into Subcarpathian Ruthenia and the suppression of the natural rights of the population.

7. Having regard to these facts, the Soviet Government cannot recognise the incorporation of Bohemia or, in some form or another, of Slovakia into the German Reich as valid or according to the generally recognised principles of international law and justice or to the principle of self-determination of nations.

8. In the opinion of the Soviet Government, the actions of the German Government not only do not avert the danger threatening general peace, but have on the contrary created and increased that danger, violated the political stability of Central Europe, strengthened the elements of insecurity which have already been created in Europe and brought about another weakening of the sense of security among the nations.

I beg you to inform your Government, Mr. Ambassador, and to accept the assurance of my respect.

(Signed) LITVINOV

To the Ambassador of the German Reich,
Graf von Schulenburg

President Doctor Eduard Beneš takes over the Leadership of the United Liberation Movement of Czechoslovakia all over the World.

From *New-Yorské Listy*
(a newspaper published in New York in Czech)
April 21st, 1939

On April 18th, 1939, Dr. Eduard Beneš received twenty delegates of the Czech National Association, the National Union of Czech Catholics and of important Slovak organisations at the Windermere Hotel, Chicago. Dr. Beneš thanked the delegates for their greetings and asked them to express his thanks to all the organisations concerned for their invitation to accept the leadership of the new movement for the liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic. Dr. Beneš stressed that he had been invited to do so by many organisations, clubs and associations of Czechoslovaks all over the world. He then gave a very detailed report of the international situation and reviewed the immediate prospects of the Czechoslovak Nation being liberated from the German yoke. Furthermore he also outlined what were the duties of Czechs, Slovaks and Carpatho-Ruthenians in this connection.

A discussion of the situation and of the duties of Czechs, Slovaks and Subcarpathian Ruthenians followed after which Dr. Beneš read a report on the conclusions reached at the meeting and made a personal declaration in which he stated *that he was accepting the request of all Czechoslovak organisations throughout the world to assume the leadership of the new Czechoslovak political movement. Dr. Beneš's report and his personal declaration were enthusiastically received and unanimously approved.* The general discussion of the difficulties with which the Czechoslovak Nation was faced took place in a spirit of the conscious unity of Czechs, Slovaks and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenians at the opening stage of the struggle for the independence of the Czechoslovak Republic. After the meeting the following statement was issued:

'On April 18th, 19th and 20th, 1939, the representatives of American citizens of Czech and Slovak origin met at Chicago. All the principal groups and important Czech and Slovak organisations were represented. They have agreed to concentrate and complete their existing central organisation under the name of the Czechoslovak National Council to which all Czechs and Slovaks in Canada, the South-American States and other countries will also adhere. The task of the Council is to consolidate in a great united movement all American citizens of Czech and Slovak origin—within the framework of American laws and American political

traditions and as American citizens and patriots—to liberate Czechoslovakia, the land of their fathers and mothers, from the unjust, temporary occupation by a military dictatorship.

Today, Tuesday, April 18th, these organisations sent a deputation to Dr. Eduard Beneš to inform him of their decision and to ask him to assume the leadership of the Czechoslovak liberation movement and to consolidate all free Czechs and Slovaks in Europe, America and elsewhere under one leadership and a common political programme. It is essential that the world should hear the voice of those who also have a right to speak in the name of the suppressed Nation at home which today cannot defend itself.

Dr. Eduard Beneš received the delegation and answered as follows: 'I thank you sincerely for your confidence. I agree with you that it is necessary today to establish a movement and an organ which after the occupation of our country and the suppression of all its liberties, will speak in its name and will defend its right to freedom and independence before the world. I thank you also for the offer of your help within the framework of your duties as American citizens, and I repeat today, as I have done since I came into your free and beautiful country, that you should be, above all, its faithful, devoted and loyal citizens. That is your first duty—a duty with which your help to us will not conflict because we ourselves, as guests of this country, will never ask anything of you that is not in conformity with these duties.

'To your invitation to head the liberation movement, I reply: I have not ceased to work for my country from the moment when I left it last October after Munich. But I maintained an attitude of reserve and loyalty to our Government as well as to the Governments of the other interested States and waited for further developments. Now, when a new, great injustice has been done to us by the occupation of our ancient land, I am free again. As you know I have appealed to the leading men of the United States of America, the British Empire, France, Soviet Russia and to the League of Nations to refuse to recognise the injustice done to us. At the same time I began to negotiate with various Czechoslovak politicians who are now outside our country in preparation for what you are now proposing: the organisation of a new world-wide liberation movement for the re-establishment of our temporarily violated freedom.

'In this sense, in contact with the diplomatic Missions of our Republic which continue to function and after agreement with the leading representatives of these Missions, especially Envoy Masaryk in London, Envoy Osuský in Paris, Envoy Hurban in Washington, Envoy Fierlinger in

Moscow and Envoy and ex-Minister of the Interior of Czechoslovakia, Dr. Slávik, who has just arrived in America from Warsaw, as well as with other political personalities, I intend to form a Czechoslovak political directorate which will represent and head our movement as a whole. In these countries we have more than a hundred thousand Czechoslovak citizens, not only Czechs and Slovaks, but also democratic Germans and Ruthenes. They all are at one with us and large numbers from all over the world are already reporting to me with a view to co-operation. In these same countries we have more than two million friends of Czechoslovak origin who are now citizens of these friendly States. But we have also behind us all faithful democratic citizens in our oppressed country and they number more than ten million people. We have right on our side and the non-recognition of German violence by the Great Powers and by a great part of the rest of the world. These are enormous assets.

'*I reply therefore that I am glad to accept your invitation.* And in agreement with the colleagues in London, Paris, Moscow and Washington whom I have already mentioned we will shortly publish a proclamation to all our people as the starting point of our new political activities. This simply means that, in the name of the Czechoslovak Republic which today cannot speak itself, we will step into the ranks of those European States which are forming a new European front against dictatorial aggression. And, in the name of the Nation which cannot speak itself, we will also associate ourselves with the latest message of President Roosevelt.

'I therefore ask all of you to stand in full unity, harmony and co-operation without regard to party, religion, social or other differences, firmly and in unity behind the ideals of American democracy. Thus you will stand also behind the ideals of Czechoslovak democracy and freedom.'

Mr. Churchill's Statement on Recognition of Czechoslovak Government.*

The Prime Minister: Communications have recently passed between my Noble Friend† on the one side and Dr. Beneš on behalf of the Czechoslovak National Committee on the other, concerning the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee as a Provisional Czechoslovak Government. As the result of these communications, Dr. Beneš informed my Noble Friend of the composition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government, in which several new members joined the previous members of the Czechoslovak National Committee, and requested the recognition by His Majesty's Government of the newly-constituted Provisional Czechoslovak Government. This recognition was granted on 21st July in a letter from my Noble Friend to Dr. Beneš in the following terms:

'In the light of exchanges of view which have taken place between us, I have the honour to inform you that, in response to the request of the Czechoslovak National Committee, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are happy to recognise and enter into relations with the Provisional Czechoslovak Government established by the Czechoslovak National Committee to function in this country. His Majesty's Government will be glad to discuss with the representatives of the Provisional Government certain questions arising out of this recognition which require settlement.'

*Hansard, House of Commons, 23rd July, 1940, Vol. 363, Col. 614. (Tr.).

†Lord Halifax. (Tr.).

Letter from R. H. Bruce Lockhart, British Representative with the Czechoslovak Provisional Government, to Dr. Eduard Beneš, President of the Republic, concerning Churchill's Speech of September 30th, 1940.

'Office of the British Representative with the
Czechoslovak Provisional Government
November 11th, 1940

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

With reference to Your Excellency's letter of October 10, regarding certain comments in Czechoslovak circles upon the Prime Minister's broadcast message to the Czechoslovak people on September 30, I am now in a position to give you the following answer for Your Excellency's private information:

The Prime Minister's statement of September 30th should be read as a whole and not misinterpreted by taking certain passages out of their context. In speaking of the Munich Agreement, Mr. Churchill simply stated that this Agreement had been destroyed, and any further elucidation or interpretation of this remark would be profitless. In this connection I venture to refer Your Excellency to Lord Halifax's letter to yourself of July 18, 1940. In that letter His Lordship said:

'I wish to make it clear that by proceeding to this act of recognition His Majesty's Government would not commit themselves to recognise or to support the establishment in the future of any particular frontiers in Central Europe.'

I am authorised to inform you officially that this statement was intended to refer to all and any frontiers including, of course, the so-called Munich line.

I trust that this explanation will enable Your Excellency to rebut criticism which seems out of place at a moment when both our Nations are fighting for their existence.

I have the honour to be, with the greatest respect, Your Excellency's most obedient servant.

(*Signed*) R. H. BRUCE LOCKHART.'

Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Sudeten-German Social Democrat Party, June 7th, 1942 :

The Executive Committee of the Sudeten-German Social Democratic Party with the addition of members of our Trade Union and co-operative organisations in England, takes note of the report of the party leaders concerning relations with the departments of the Provisional Czechoslovak State organisation.

The Executive Committee wishes to emphasise that two invitations to the Sudeten-German Social Democratic Party to co-operate in the Czecho-Slovak State Council have been answered affirmatively. In this connection it calls attention to the relevant passages in the addresses of State President Dr. Beneš to the State Council on December 11th, 1940, and November 25th, 1941. The position was clearly described in the message of the President on November 25th, 1941, when he declared: 'As I have already stated last year, I have discussed matters also with some political representatives of our democratic Germans. By mutual agreement their co-operation on the floor of the State Council has for the time being been postponed in view of events at home.'

This declaration fully coincides with the declaration of the Party Conference of Sudeten-German Social Democrats in England of September 28th, 1941, intimating its readiness 'to inaugurate already abroad that measure of co-operation with the Czechoslovak State organisation which is rendered possible by psychological conditions at home.'

We abstain from all criticisms of the fact that meanwhile a representative of the Sudeten Communists* has been admitted to the State Council without any previous consultation as to whether this decision was in harmony with the agreement mentioned by the President on November 25th, 1941.

The Executive Committee of the Party does not ignore the tragic background from which the difficulties for closer co-operation between Czechs and democratic Sudeten-Germans arise at this stage. It is convinced that the formal question of participation or non-participation in the State Council is of lesser importance and that the final result of our policy of agreement will depend on the measure of goodwill on both sides. It always remains our aim to work for close co-operation between the democratic and socialist masses of the Czechs and Sudeten-Germans both in a revolt against Hitler's tyranny and after this revolt. But we do not

*Karl Kreibich who was appointed Czechoslovak Ambassador to the U.S.S.R. in 1950 (Tr.).

want to leave our Czech friends in any doubt that in the pursuit of this policy we can sacrifice our unity with the heroes and martyrs of the anti-Hitler struggle at home. Nor can we renounce our responsibility which history has imposed on us as the strongest democratic element in the Sudeten population. The undefeated ranks of our movement at home feel strong enough to settle their accounts with the Nazi criminals in the hour of the inevitable European revolution and to take into their hands the work of re-democratisation and of economic and social renaissance. They have fought against Fascism under most difficult conditions with perseverance and with no smaller sacrifices than the democratic elements among the Slovaks. Therefore we must already at this moment reject any inequality of treatment between democratic Germans and Slovaks in the new State organisation. We are especially opposed to the fact that the Sudeten-Germans are threatened with a transfer of population whereas for Slovakia the basis of policy is simply the principle of political and legal reckoning with the instruments of Hitler.

The Executive Committee of the Party is authorised to continue its efforts to work in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and in accordance with the traditional policy of agreement of our movement for a solution of the Czech-Sudeten-German problem by negotiation.

The Executive Committee of the Party instructs the party leaders to make it clear to our Czech partners with equal friendship and urgency that a unilateral solution of the Czech-German question after this war by force could not be permanent and would not be in the interest either of the Czech Nation or of European peace.

Letter of Wenzel Jaksch to President Eduard Beneš of June 22nd, 1942 :

London, June 22nd, 1942

MR. PRESIDENT,

I have waited till today before delivering our resolution of June 7th for reasons which I need not explain. Allow me to assure you that the latest fearful events at home* have deeply concerned us too. Nothing has changed in our friendship to the Czech Nation and we mourn its victims as our own brothers.

After this introduction, dear Mr. President, allow me to ask you to take note of the enclosed copy of our protest. It has been broadcast and can surely be regarded as representing the views of our best fighters who since October 1st, 1938, have been exposed to the most severe persecutions. But important considerations force me when sending you this letter, to try to obtain an elucidation of political issues which can no longer be postponed. In our political resolution we have simply described the entirely negative result of all discussions up to this moment. I think I can claim some merit in the fact that this alibi of our goodwill is clothed in very moderate language. It does not express the deep exasperation felt by our responsible representatives at the way in which our movement has been treated since Munich. The astonishment can be hardly described, Mr. President, which was evoked in our ranks by the present propaganda for a mass transfer of the Sudeten population. Such measures would naturally be directed against the population of whole regions and would also affect those districts which before and after Munich stood the test with real heroism in the fight against Nazi Fascism. Our people who are schooled in fighting and inured to suffering have not overlooked the difference between the British thesis of the punishment of the culprits and the design of Czech policy not simply to reach a reckoning with the Nazi criminals but also to endeavour to secure an unnecessary increase in their own national influence. Remembering how deeply our working people are rooted in their homeland, it is clear that their evacuation from the whole territory could be carried out only by brute force against the unanimous resistance of all political forces (groups) still remaining after the fall of the Nazi Government.

Dear Mr. President, it is with a heavy heart that I must put before you all our fears. Let it be said clearly, and rather today than tomorrow, that the programme of the transfer of population would be a dangerous slogan and would unchain civil war along the language frontiers in Bohemia and

*The terror which followed the shooting of Reichsprotektor Heydrich on May 27th, 1942 (Tr.).

Moravia. There are other ways of punishing the Nazi criminals. In the Sudeten territory, too, a terrible reckoning will come. Our dead and many thousands of our best men are a guarantee of this. But reckoning with the Nazis does not justify the transfer of the population of the whole borderland region, a transfer which would necessarily have to be unselective. The transfer of population would be revenge without differentiation and that means, dear Mr. President—I wish to say it quite frankly—*to destroy every basis of democratic co-operation for a generation.*

In face of this danger we cannot simply renounce the moral heritage of a long period of national co-operation. Today perhaps much has been forgotten. But in the book of history it is written that in the fatal years of 1935–1938 one million Germans stood at the side of the Czech Nation. That the Catholics and the Farmers' Union capitulated after the fall of Austria must be judged more moderately when we consider how demoralising was the influence of the great Czech parties on the German population. The heroism of our workers has compensated for much of the weakness which manifested itself in other sectors of the activist camp. The members of our movement will stand before the Czech Nation with the clearest conscience of the world. Their sacrifices and the active co-operation which they are developing in spite of the continuing persecutions are positive items which cannot be overlooked in the final balance-sheet of the fight against Hitlerism.

Allow me, Mr. President, to sum up all these opinions in a single phrase: *we believe it is to our credit that Czechoslovak democracy fell heroically.*

Dr. Hodža has admitted in his last book that he had already offered Henlein general municipal elections in the autumn of 1937 which would have meant the extinction of the whole free administration in our border territories. If our party had not gone into the election campaign in spite of accusations of inner-political treason (and practically alone) then the battle of international propaganda for the fate of Czechoslovakia would have already been lost in the spring of 1938. In that case the Runciman Mission would not have been required, nor the Munich decision. Even the heroic gesture of the September mobilisation would have been denied to the country. Every objective examination of these tragic events will confirm that our organisations held the Sudeten territory politically even at the time when this region had already been practically abandoned by the State administration.

These are the reasons, Mr. President, why my best comrades are filled with profound resentment at the fact that the openly declared goodwill of their legal representatives abroad has met with so little response. Conscious

that they have fulfilled their duty to 100 per cent, they are not prepared to accept discrimination against themselves in favour of the Slovak representatives in the Government or the State Council seeing that the claims of the latter are certainly not stronger than ours.

At this point, dear Mr. President, I refer to the exchange of Notes on the occasion of our party conference in London on September 27th and 28th, 1941, to prove how our honest readiness has remained unrequited and how the fund of personal confidence in the hearts of faithful people is being destroyed. Perhaps not without justification I may add that I am filled with deep despair at the path Czech policy is taking in the way of trying to dictate against old allies who stood at the Czech Nation's side when it was abandoned by all its friends.

I would therefore like to conclude this explanation of our last resolution with the following statement:

The absolutely negative attitude of the departments of the Provisional Czechoslovak State Organisation towards an agreement on political and economic transitional solutions deprives our policy of conciliation of all foundation.

The policy of transfer of population lies outside the scope of the principle of the legal continuity of the State in the name of which the Czechoslovak Government has until now demanded the loyalty of democratic Sudeten-Germans abroad.

Our resolution is an invitation to all responsible elements of the Czechoslovak State Government not to think only in terms of a violent solution and not to drive the democratic Sudeten Germans who feel attached to their homeland into a conflict which might have fatal consequences for both parties.

I am fully aware, my very dear Mr. President, of the implications of this statement.

Accept, Mr. President, the expression of my special respect.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) W. JAKSCH

*Basic principles of the attitude of the President of the Republic, Dr. Eduard Beneš, to the Resolution of June 7th, 1942, from the Executive Committee of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party handed to Wenzel Jaksch by the President of the Republic on December 1st, 1942 :**

On June 22nd, 1942, Mr. Jaksch sent to President Dr. Beneš the attached resolution of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party agreed upon at the meeting of its Executive Committee in London in June, 1942. Though this resolution does not express the policy of the party in exile to the fullest extent, it gives the principles of the Party's attitude to some essential problems of Czechoslovak policy as conceived by the Government of the Republic at present in exile in London and already advocated by President Dr. Beneš since Munich.

We therefore think it necessary to clarify our attitude to this resolution in the following notes:

1. The resolution has every right to refer to President Dr. Beneš's declarations of December 11th, 1940, and November 25th, 1941, and the declaration of the Party's conference of September 28th, 1941. These declarations express the policy of the two sides at the times in question. President Beneš has not changed his standpoint and still stands by these declarations.

2. The nomination of Karl Kreibich to the State Council does not in any way change the President's declaration of December 11th, 1940, and of November, 1941. Both declarations, especially that of November 25th, 1941, were the result of discussions between Dr. Beneš and Wenzel Jaksch to whom their contents were announced before the declarations were made in the State Council. On December 11th, 1940, President Dr. Beneš said: 'I stress that as occasion arises I will accept as a matter of course the participation of some politicians and groups not yet among us today. I have discussed this with some politicians from among our German fellow-citizens. I have offered them participation and I have obtained an affirmative answer (these words refer to politicians of the party of German Social Democrats). I therefore suppose their representatives will join the State Council in near future. I have discussed the same question also with some of our Communists. The negotiations are not yet finished but I hope that an agreement will be reached in their case too. There are still some other elements, as for instance the Jewish Party, about whose co-operation in the

*This memorandum contains internal evidence that the views expressed were those of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government as a whole. See also President Beneš's letter to Mr. Jaksch of June 10th, 1943 (Tr.).

State Council a decision will be made—in some cases, soon, and in others when the State Council has been augmented in the manner mentioned above.'

From this declaration it is clear that those still not represented belonged to three independent groups with which negotiations were conducted separately. In 1940, before the opening of the first State Council no agreement had been reached with any of these groups. At that time the German Social Democrats made political demands which were unacceptable for President Beneš (the group of German progressives did the same); the Jewish groups could not reach agreement among themselves and the Communists were uncertain and not united in their policy towards our Liberation Movement.

This situation lasted until the autumn of 1941. Before the opening of the second State Council and after discussions between Dr. Beneš and W. Jaksch it was frankly agreed by both parties that political conditions at home and in the emigration and in the army were such (killing and persecutions at home and the strengthening of radical Czech nationalism) that the nomination of members from the German Social Democrats could not be carried out at that moment. It must be mentioned that though Wenzel Jaksch held at that time to his original general policy towards the Czechoslovak liberation movement, he was—if his attitude was correctly understood—ready to accept membership in the Czechoslovak State Council unconditionally in 1941 having regard to the definitive recognition of the Czechoslovak Government by the British Government and the Soviet Union's participation in the war.

But at that time the political situation had already developed sufficiently (after Germany's attack on the Soviet Union and the recognition of the Czechoslovak Government by the Soviet Government) to envisage an immediate participation of elements from the ranks of the Communists. They were again offered this by President Beneš—negotiations had already been started in 1940 after the provisional recognition of the Government and before the German attack on the Soviet Union—and the offer was accepted unconditionally. It was only asked that not only Czechs, but also Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians and Ruthenes might be nominated for membership. This was promised on the express condition that all nominations would be, *not as members of this or that nationality*, but as individuals close to Communist ideas and tendencies (as the State Council was not composed of *representatives of parties or nationalities, but of individuals* who expressed the various political tendencies in the Republic). The President then asked for a list of ten to twelve possible candidates from which he

nominated four under these conditions. None were nominated to represent a particular nationality because in addition the Communists themselves do not have national groups in their party.

Full agreement was also reached with the Jewish group after discussions lasting a year and the nomination was therefore carried out.

With the Zinner group (German Social Democrats in Czechoslovakia) there were no differences either in the matter of the State Council or concerning their participation in the struggle for the re-establishment of the Republic and the group made no prior conditions so that there was no need for fresh negotiations. Nevertheless there were no nominations from their ranks for the same reasons as in the case of the Sudeten German Social Democrats, namely to avoid giving the impression that by nominating somebody from the Zinner group the Czechs were interfering in the quarrels of the two groups of German Social Democrats. And there were also no nominations from the other German groups for the reasons mentioned above (persecutions at home and radical nationalism in the emigration and at home).

These are the reasons for nominating a German Communist as member of the State Council to which the resolution of June, 1942, referred. There were no obligations to follow any other procedure and no obligations not corresponding to the situation just described would have been accepted if they had been suggested.

3. Nevertheless we agree with the point of view of the resolution of June, 1942, that participation or non-participation in the State Council is of minor importance in the matter of German co-operation in the Czechoslovak liberation movement. The essential point is whether it is possible to reach, abroad and at once, sincere co-operation between the democratic, anti-Hitler masses of Czechs and Germans in full goodwill on both sides and on the *basis of principles which both accept and recognise for their common fight against Hitlerism and for the re-establishment of the Republic as well as for settling accounts with all war criminals* and those guilty of all persecutions and crimes committed in our country against whomsoever it may be and *to settle accounts with the last remnants of Fascism and Nazism in the Republic.*

4. As to the question—the settlement of accounts with Fascism, Nazism and all the guilty men among Bohemian Germans—the resolution of the Executive Committee of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party of June, 1942, says that the party wishes to carry this out itself and to take the work of re-democratisation of the Germans into its own hands.

To this the following observations must be made: It cannot be accepted for one moment that a party—any party—could be granted either the

right or the power to re-educate by itself any particular part of the population of the Republic unless the party in question had got all authority and a political dictatorship into its hands. Such a thesis is to us unthinkable. The task is a great and extremely difficult one and can be carried out successfully only after the war as a result of a popular revolution of all inhabitants of the Republic and therefore by the State and the State administration as a whole, an administration which springs from a common victory and a common anti-Fascist revolution and which puts itself at the service of that revolution. *We hold this to be true for Czechs and Slovaks as well as for the Germans in the Republic.*

For this reason, President Beneš has formulated his attitude to the question of settling accounts with Nazism and with all guilty persons in the Republic in general terms and in a manner acceptable to all in his speech in the State Council on November 25th, 1941. Before addressing the Council he showed the draft of his speech to Wenzel Jaksch who agreed to it at once only asking for the addition of one point (which was accepted) The text of this declaration was as follows:

'As I have already announced last year, I have also had negotiations with some political elements among our democratic Germans who fought by our side in 1938 for the integrity of our Republic. By mutual agreement their co-operation on the floor of the State Council has been postponed for the time being in view of events at home.

'Some doubts and discussions have started in our ranks about these matters. I will repeat what I said last year so that it may be clear to all. Everyone who is sincerely fighting against present Germany is our ally. Every Czechoslovak citizen who sincerely stands against all that is Nazi and all that Nazis stand for, what they have done and are doing, can join our ranks and co-operate with us. The State Council is an organism which has as its first and most important mission to unite all political elements of all former political lines of thought and of all nationalities in the Republic owing allegiance to the State and the Republic, on the basis of their consistent opposition to Nazism and recognition of the present organisation of our Republic on British soil and on the basis of the oath taken by them in this spirit.

'We all know that the discussions to which I referred were concerned with what should happen to the Germans in our Republic after the defeat of Nazi Germany. I think it is essential to say a few words on this subject now. As far as I know the views of politically-minded people at home, they are in general identical with what is already being discussed between the Allied Governments and with what will probably, as Prime Minister

Winston Churchill himself has hinted, become one of the articles of the armistice and peace negotiations, namely, that it will be necessary to punish war criminals everywhere, without exception and without mercy. It will especially be necessary to punish all those who, directly or indirectly, have participated in acts of treason and bestialities perpetrated by the Henleinites, the Nazis and the Gestapo, who have helped to persecute our people, to humiliate them morally, humanly and racially, who have destroyed, robbed, plundered the occupied countries and their populations and who have betrayed, stolen and murdered.'

This justice which will not discriminate between Germans and Slovaks —or Czechs—will be meted out by the whole Czechoslovak democratic people without distinction of class or nationality, and *especially by the State itself as part of its whole post-war policy.*

5. The resolution of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party of June, 1942, alleges that in the reconstruction of the State the Germans are to be treated less favourably than the Slovaks and that the Germans are threatened with a general transfer of population whereas the Slovaks are to receive individual political and legal punishment.

To this it must be remarked:

(*a*) From the very outset of the movement for the liberation of our Republic, President Beneš has formulated all his political concepts on the basis of the absolute equality of all our citizens. When resistance started in 1939 he asked for the political and military co-operation of all citizens and of all leading politicians irrespective of party or nationality with the exception of the Fascists and he offered participation in the liberation movement *to all equally*. If in 1939 and in 1940 all had spontaneously accepted this offer, our campaign for the recognition of the Government and the formation of the provisional State organisation would have proceeded much more quickly to the moral and political advantage of all. Unfortunately not everyone took part in the struggle for the recognition of the Government and Republic. At that time only a few people had a clear understanding of the situation. Ideologically, many had rather chaotic ideas of the way the war was developing and of the political prospects of this or that Nation and State. Some expected a too great, too fast and too far-reaching revolution and changes which would be to the advantage of themselves and their tendencies and ideas. Others did not realise the unexpected possibilities and the great consequences of this world revolution and anti-German war in unforeseen directions. The Poles, the Germans, the Slovaks and of course also some Czechs made a number of unrealistic and unreal calculations. For these reasons conditions were laid before Dr. Benes from the outset

which he and those Czechs with whom the decision rested, considered then and consider so much the more now, to be unacceptable. Dr. Beneš rejected them in principle from whatever side they came : from Slovaks, Czechs or Germans. He acted, and is still acting, on the principle *that in the question of allegiance to the State and the fulfilment of civic duties during such a struggle as the one started by Nazism for Nazi pan-Germanism, for Munich and for the present war, no conditions are any more admissible now than they were in 1938.* Our State has never ceased to have a legal existence *and none of its citizens were relieved of their responsibilities towards it.* From this it follows that occasional concrete political demands can be addressed to the leading men and to the Government at this time and objections can be lodged against the composition or activity of the Government and the authorities, but the question cannot and must not *be raised as to whether or not or on what conditions this or that individual shall be a citizen of the State.* Neither should there have been raised the question whether this or that citizen was or was not to fulfil his military duty towards the State and towards the fight for its resurrection and continued existence.

The theory and practice of the Sudeten German Social Democratic group since 1939 has been different and precisely for that reason it was necessary to repeat the President's point of view which he had never ceased to expound. The fact that at the outset Great Britain and France may have shown some hesitation, which today no longer exists, does not excuse anti-Hitlerite, democratic Czechoslovak citizens of the Republic for having shared this hesitation or for having drawn grave political conclusions therefrom, seeing that all of them uncompromisingly opposed everything that happened at Munich and afterwards.

When war was impending and when it had actually begun, conditions of the kind mentioned above were put to Dr. Beneš by some Slovak and German politicians. Some withdrew them after Dr. Beneš had categorically rejected them. Those Slovaks who posed no conditions have co-operated with the liberation movement throughout. Those who withdrew their conditions on the ground that they had not realised the implications from the Czech standpoint were gradually admitted to co-operation. Those who made or are still making conditions of this nature, are not being admitted to co-operation. President Beneš advocated and advocates the view that the conditions made to him concern problems which only the whole Czechoslovak Nation is authorised to decide. He has never departed from this view in one single instance. This is a democratic standpoint and politically the only correct one.

The President takes this attitude towards all nationalities, parties and

politicians of the Republic and he is applying it in practice to all with consistency and justice—to the Ruthenians, for example, as well as to others. Nor does he consider it justifiable for the Germans to regard the Slovak-Czech nationality question as being on a par with the German-Czech relationship. It is well known that among Czechs as well as among Slovaks the question of a special Slovak nationality is a matter of dispute and that a great percentage of the Slovaks and the immense majority of the Czechs do not recognise any national differentiation between Czechs and Slovaks. Although he has always respected and still respects the view of those who have felt or feel that they are only Slovaks, President Beneš since boyhood has considered himself to be not a Czech, but a Czecho-slovak (in the times of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the word used was 'Cechoslovan'—Czechoslav). In this matter, a large proportion of Czech as well as Slovak politicians are in agreement with him.

(*b*) As has been stated above, in the matter of liquidating Nazism and Fascism and of punishing the criminals, President Beneš takes a strict view which is applicable to all nationalities in the Republic equally whether Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Hungarians, Ruthenians. If this punishment involves no transfer of larger groups of any population of the Republic, so much the better. But we must realise that it will be really a question of punishing *many thousands of Nazis and Fascists of all nationalities*. It is for all of us to consider together how this can be done in such a way as to avoid a repetition of what happened in connection with pan-Germanism, Nazism and Fascism in our country throughout almost the whole twenty years of the Republic and, what is even more important, to avoid a repetition of what happened at the time of Munich and after. The President and the Czechoslovak Government do not intend to pardon any guilty person to whatever group he may belong. The questions are: Should they all be slaughtered or should huge prisons or life-long concentration camps be established for them, or is it better that they should leave the country for ever?

This raises the question of the so-called transfer of populations. It must be stated that the Czechoslovak Government has so far reached no decision on this problem: that views on transfer are views which so far have only been formulated by individual political groups; that these ideas are not advocated or propagated only among our people but also among other allied Nations and even among politicians (as for instance ex-President Hoover) who are very strongly opposed to a post-war policy of revenge and reprisals against Germany. It must also be put on record that some of our people are also opposed to transfer.

The question of transfer therefore is not and cannot be an exclusively *Czechoslovak* question. *It is a question of general European importance, a question which concerns not only Czechoslovakia, but also many other countries and it may therefore be included among the international problems which must be solved at the final settlement of European post-war relations.* Only at that moment will the Czechoslovak Government and our whole liberation movement be able to take a definitive attitude to this question. It will do so *only on the basis of the situation at the end of the war in accordance with developments at home and the attitude of the other victorious Powers towards the armistice and peace terms.* Until then the official Czechoslovak position will certainly not be defined.

6. Concerning the Atlantic Charter it must be stated that President Beneš has already told Mr. Jaksch that when giving its adhesion to the principles agreed upon between President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill on August 14th, 1941, the Czechoslovak Government formulated reservations which it does not intend to withdraw.* What happened at Munich will remain a grave warning to all Czechoslovaks without exception not to be misled by imprecise general principles into political agitation which can never solve the vital problems of all the people in the Czechoslovak Republic. The races in the Czechoslovak Nation cannot and never will accept the principle of self-determination for three millions of

*Reservations to Atlantic Charter (from letter of 29th August, 1941):

. . . (1) that the final interpretation and application of these principles will be in accordance with the circumstances and needs of the different parts of Europe and the world;

(2) that the vital interests and sovereign rights of the Czechoslovak Republic as internationally acknowledged by the whole civilised world and temporarily disturbed by Germany's acts of aggression beginning in September, 1938, will be reinstated and safeguarded;

(3) that the application of points 2, 3 and 8 will result in securing such frontiers, such international, political, legal, military and economic guarantees for all peace-loving peoples, but especially for the neighbours of Germany, as to enable them to defend peace for themselves and for the world against any future attempts at aggression either by Germany or anyone else;

(4) that in the future economic structure of the world, small nations like Czechoslovakia, by access to a fair share of raw materials and other necessary help, will be given an opportunity as equal among equals in close co-operation with their neighbours, to reconstruct quickly and permanently their economic life, which has been so cruelly devastated by Germany and other aggressors, thus securing improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security for all.

'The Czechoslovak Government wishes me to place the above observations on record for His Majesty's Government and it does not intend to publish them.

(Signed) JAN MASARYK.' (Tr.).

Germans if formulated, interpreted and advocated in such a manner as was done previously at the last peace conference and throughout the following twenty years. Neither President Masaryk nor President Beneš ever concealed this because such a concept of self-determination *is* a priori *a denial of the right of self-determination of ten million Czechoslovaks and precludes the very existence of an independent Czechoslovak State*. It may certainly be expected *that after this war the principle of self-determination will be given a fresh formulation by international law and that its application will be on entirely new lines*. The unparalleled misuse by Nazism and Fascism of this principle as formerly conceived and its incredible and shameful pollution by Nazi gangsterism in our country and in all occupied countries immediately afterwards will surely have this result. The former concept of this principle has completely failed during the last twenty years. It is no longer operative and the war will certainly result in the establishment of other new concepts.

7. With regard to the so-called 'Vertragslösung des tschechisch-sudetendeutschen Problems' (solution of the Czech-Sudeten German problem by treaty) it must be stressed that such a formula will certainly give rise to misunderstandings between us. President Beneš rejected it when it was submitted by the Slovaks. And we mutually agreed to replace it by the formula of a *democratic* solution of all political, administrative and other disputes in the Republic. Such a formula will serve for the solution of all problems, the Czech-German problem in the Czech Lands included.

On this occasion it is perhaps right to give notice that at a suitable moment President Beneš and the Government intend to invite all our German citizens spontaneously and definitively to desist from describing themselves as 'sudetendeutsch'. The reasons are:

(*a*) Scientifically, geographically and historically the word 'Sudeten' has an entirely different meaning from the one at present attributed to it.

(*b*) The word has come to express the political fraud into which Henlein and German Fascism have turned the German question in Czechoslovakia. Henlein wanted to bring new political facts into being by the use of a special terminology. It was, and is, a fraud for which he is responsible. It is perhaps comprehensible that other parties in our country which wanted to fight Henlein's fraudulent political agitation should have used the same term for tactical reasons. Politically, this was an error. Difficulties are never solved by accepting the errors or the demagogy of one's opponent. If we want to emancipate ourselves completely from Henleinism and Nazism, let us do so consistently and not by succumbing to their methods! Let us return to our good traditions!

(*c*) The words 'Sudeten', 'Sudetenland', 'Sudetendeutscher' will always be connected in the Czech provinces with Nazi bestialities perpetrated on Czechs and democratic Germans too in the fatal crisis before and after 1938. We must seek a new agreement by freeing ourselves from these sad, politically fatal and (so far as we are concerned) unacceptable instruments of Nazi policy.

(*d*) The Czechs will not accept the word 'Sudeten' after the war. They will ban it. It is therefore in our interests to agree before it is too late that the word shall vanish from our political vocabulary on both sides. Political common sense requires that this should not be done by laws and decrees. It would be ridiculous if Czechoslovak anti-Henleinites and anti-Nazi democrats quarrelled among themselves over words after the war and if they created political problems out of the Henlein heritage and terminology. We believe that our German citizens will give this matter due consideration and will make all necessary preparations.

No one can doubt that President Beneš personally is and will consistently remain opposed to the so-called 'einseitige Machtlösungen der tschechisch-deutschen Frage' (unilateral solutions of the Czech-German problem by force). But we would not be realistic politicians if we did not tell ourselves plainly *that if the German Nation and State is defeated, they will have to bear the consequences of their defeat just as every defeated State and Nation have to bear them in every war.* Everyone who has in any way participated in the war or declared his solidarity with or helped the German cause in any way will be concerned in this defeat.

The great majority of Germans in the Czechoslovak provinces have adhered to the German State, have declared their solidarity with it and are still helping it effectively. They will therefore be concerned. How, is a question which none of us can answer correctly today. It will be decided in accordance with the circumstances in which the war ends. But it is also in the interest of Czechs and Slovaks that the settlement should be reasonable and just and not simply an act of revenge. The greater the number of those who unconditionally help the Czechs in the Republic and abroad to destroy Nazism the easier the settlement and the better and quicker will be the re-establishment of co-operation on the basis of equality and justice.

The President earnestly wishes this to come about and he will co-operate to that end justly and devotedly in the same spirit in which he acted until 1938 as Minister and still more as President. It is manifest to everyone that some Germans will and must live in the new Republic. We hope that they will be loyal citizens in equality with all others and that there will be no repetition whatsoever of their behaviour since 1934 under the influence of

German Nazism. It will be agreed that this would neither be in the interests of the Czech people nor in those of European peace.

But it would be a fatal error if it again began to be said that the realisation of this aim depends only on the Czechs and on what the Republic does in regard to the German question. There are 80 million Germans and *the small Czechoslovak Nation cannot live with a German revolver permanently against its breast.* So long as the Bohemian Germans fail to understand that the Czechoslovak Nation cannot possibly live politically under the permanent threat of having their State destroyed at any given moment, thus depriving them of the essential condition for their national existence, there will be no agreement but only strife and attempts to bring about 'einseitige Machtlösungen'. Appeals to the so-called 'Selbstbestimmungsrecht' (right of self-determination) regardless of the Czechs *in the area which is indispensable to the existence of our State and Nation*—such as have been made in the last twenty years under the Republic by nearly all our Germans with the support of the other Germans and of their great Reich—*constituted and always will constitute an 'einseitige Machtlösung'*. Hitler simply put into operation this 'einseitige Machtlösung' in the face of world opinion when, ideologically speaking, the situation was sufficiently prepared for him. *If this doctrine which from the standpoint of our country is wholly inadmissible is revived, then Hitlerism will be also, though perhaps in a new form, and this will lead to a new world war.*

The doctrine was called 'The right of the Germans to national unity'. But the effect—*whether intended or not—was a political pan-Germanism which is the real father of Nazism.* We conclude therefore that the inhabitants of our Borderland *have no right to a collective and territorial 'Selbstbestimmungsrecht' without the consent of the Czechs* who, if the right were exercised, would always be literally in the grip of the adjacent Reich and would be deprived of their own right of self-determination, that is to say, of their freedom.

Every German of course has and must have a right to *individual and personal* 'Selbstbestimmung' and can freely leave the State and the environment in which political conditions are not to his liking. The German Nation, as well as other Nations, has a right to its German State but not the right that all Germans wherever they live must be within the boundaries of this State. Other Nations—France for example—does not have this right. Whether all members of the same Nation shall or shall not be in one State is a question of political opportunity, of practical possibility, of geography, of economic viability and desirability, of historic development as well as, among other things, of the interests of other Nations. But it is never a question of principle.

The principle of territorial and collective 'Selbstbestimmungsrecht' for national minorities or fractions of nations which already have their own national States, is political dynamite calculated to destroy the life of all Central European States and nations and the existence of world peace. On this point as long ago as the last Peace Conference President Beneš agreed with Lansing against Wilson.

From this it follows that minorities are in danger of being outvoted. But they have the right to defend themselves against this possibility and to demand the highest possible degree of democracy. But so long as their defence consists in appeals to territorial and collective 'Selbstbestimmungsrecht' and in constant threats to disrupt the State, no majority will be ready to make any concessions. In its political struggle, a minority may appeal to all possible rights and use all methods with one exception: territorial and collective 'Selbstbestimmungsrecht' coupled with threats and programmes to secede from the State. Otherwise there will never be agreement between the minority and the majority.

In our opinion, this is *the psychological law on which is based all loyal internal and foreign policy.* If Czechs and Germans do not agree on this absolutely fundamental question concerning the future of the Republic, neither will they agree on solid, loyal and real co-operation in the Republic after the war. Once more, there will only be 'einseitige Machtlösungen'—as there have been between Czechs and Germans for the past five or six centuries. *There will again be pan-Germanism, a new Nazism, a new Hitler and a new and dreadful catastrophe.* Nobody who understands the present events and the laws of political strife and development in Europe, can doubt this for a moment. President Beneš and the Czechoslovak Government do not want this to happen and they trust *that all these questions may be solved between us sincerely, thoroughly, realistically and, therefore, permanently.* They consider this to be possible only on the lines on which they have started at the very outset of our fight for the Republic after Munich.

Letter from Dr. Eduard Beneš, President of the Republic, to Wenzel Jaksch, dated January 10th, 1943:

London, January 10th, 1943

Dear Colleague Jaksch,

On June 22nd, 1942, you sent me, with a personal letter from yourself, the resolution of the Sudeten-German Social Democratic Party of June 7th, 1942. I expressed my own unofficial opinion of this resolution and the views of a number of members of our Government in a special memorandum which I have already given you.* That communication also contained answers to many matters mentioned in your *personal* letter to me and I will therefore not refer to them again in this *personal* letter to you. I will confine myself to essential points only. But as some of the views expressed in your letter are formulated as reproaches addressed to me personally, I am obliged to answer them.

1. I will pass over the reproaches in your letter concerning the period before Munich, whether they concern the 'Behandlung unserer Bewegung' (treatment of our movement) or the behaviour of some of the big Czech political parties in 1935–38, or the announcement of elections or the attitude of Dr. Hodža and the State machine towards the German Social Democrats in the Republic. This would be too long a chapter. As everywhere else, there was also a struggle between political parties in our Republic. As everywhere else, there was a struggle between Left and Right. As everywhere in Europe, there was a crisis in our country too and a struggle between Democracy, Fascism and Communism. And with us it had the same accompanying symptoms as elsewhere. But in our country the Left always kept the upper hand and its followers held their positions till the time of Munich. Among you Germans the difficulties were greater because in our country too the great majority of Germans succumbed to Fascism. To explain this as due to conditions in the Republic, to a wrong procedure *vis-à-vis* the German Social Democrats and others would certainly be wholly incorrect. You yourself admit in your letter that in the years 1935–1938 only one million Germans (that is to say about 30 per cent of the German inhabitants) stood at the side of the Czech people—in other words, at the side of the Czechoslovak State. And surely neither of us today will argue that Fascism and Nazism are phenomena which originated in a Czech milieu or from Czech faults or that the war which has broken out between Nazism and the whole world is a war which originated in Czechoslovak conditions.

If therefore there was a crisis of democracy in our country it originated

*See the preceding document. (Tr.).

in the same causes as in the rest of the world. And it is a fact that the Czech people and with them the Czechoslovak State put up a better resistance than the German people and the other continental States. I am proud to claim that much of this was my doing. But alas, on this Nation which is mainly Czechoslovak and on this democratic State there was put an unheard of and unjust pressure from outside, *which was visibly of a reactionary character* and which had—if not for its aim, certainly as its consequence—the downfall of Czech democracy. What happened in 1938 in our internal policy was not merely an attack against German democracy in our country. It was first and foremost an attack against the whole State and particularly against *Czech democracy*. That is why I, personally, was the first to fall after Munich. Therefore to address these reproaches to the Czechs and to me is not justified. A world war was in preparation and the Czechoslovak State and Nation were the object of an attack which aimed at the destruction and death of State and Nation. The Czechs *had to* prove to the world that they were not guilty and that they wished to do all in their power to avert war. They had to make national and political sacrifices and to make an attempt, under pressure from foreign reaction, to come to an agreement with the Fascist Germans. I was anxious that the war should break out in circumstances which from the standpoint of morality would put the whole democratic world on our side. In pursuit of this, we went to the very brink. *We ourselves made the greatest sacrifices in that dreadful crisis* and the German people as a whole could not but profit therefrom. And it is to the honour of the Czechoslovak people that, when I signed the decree of mobilisation, the Nation was united from the Left to the Right. It is my greatest satisfaction that as President I maintained this unity and that in the decisive moment our people would have gone firmly behind me into a life and death struggle without regard to left or right political tendencies. I gladly admit the merit of the German Social Democrats, that they held out with us valiantly to the very end even though *under influences from abroad and under the pressure of events* there were attempts to exclude them from the Government majority.

The simple fact is that after all that has already happened in this war I do not consider your interpretations to be correct from a historical point of view. Certainly, it has been a matter of concern to you as a party; but internationally, politically and morally our behaviour was correct. My heart bled when I saw the blows dealt to democracy and when I myself had to participate in them. Nevertheless I did not fear to take those various steps in the spheres of internal and international policy which were to save peace and our country. Today that is my, and our, great strength.

But I do not consider it at all right to hark back now to all these so much less important disputes or reproaches about the past. We all have before us the *war with Hitler* and Nazism in which one side or the other must be defeated once and for all. I have refused to discuss with our Czech people whether we ourselves should have declared and waged war with Germany. I have refused to quarrel with the Slovaks about which of us committed mistakes or the greater mistakes. Similarly in the matter of our Germans I do not wish to return now to such discussions of less importance. In the eyes of the international public, we would win this dispute today even more decisively than Hitler won it against us in 1938. But after the war we can come back to these matters. In fact, we will have to do so.

2. In the matter of the transfer of population my attitude is fully expressed in the enclosed notes on your Party's resolution of June 7th, 1942.

3. They also express my point of view towards the respective positions of the Slovaks and Germans in the resistance movement. I only want to add that beyond doubt the great majority of Slovaks (at least 80 per cent) have never changed their attitude to the Czechs and to the united Czechoslovak State either in the crisis of 1938 or in the present war and that today they are firmer in this respect than ever. Moreover, the great majority of Slovaks abroad, after the first mistaken steps of some of their leaders, have put themselves *unconditionally and unreservedly* at the service of the movement for the re-establishment of the united State though they have their own ideas about its internal structure. And though today there are personal quarrels—with, for instance, Osuský or Hodža—*there is, and was, no substantial political divergence concerning principles as between Czechs and Slovaks.*

On the German side this is neither the situation at home nor has it been from the beginning here abroad.

4. I have therefore only to answer the conclusion of your letter in which you allege in substance:

(*a*) After the exchange of notes between myself and your Party on September 27th and 28th, 1941, in which you expressed your readiness for co-operation, you were not answered by deeds: you were not invited to co-operate in the Provisional State Organisation nor even in provisional economic and political matters and that this destroyed the confidence of your people (if I understand correctly, their confidence also in me). You conclude from this that Czech policy has started on the road of trying to dictate to an old ally which had not deserted the Czechs at a time when all other people had done so.

(*b*) You stress that the programme of the transfer of population lies outside the principle of the legal continuity of the Republic.

(*c*) You stress that your Party's resolution of June 7th, 1942, is a request to all responsible Czechoslovak elements not to think in terms of violent solutions of the German problem which would drive you into a situation which would be fatal for both parties.

And in the beginning of the letter you take credit for the fact that in your Party's resolution of June 7th the 'alibi' disclaiming responsibility for our present mutual relations was formulated with such moderation.

As most of the discussions were between us two and several times your whole delegation has been to see me, this means that the responsibility for this state of affairs is on my shoulders. It is therefore necessary that I should also express my views of the matter.

5. I therefore state these facts:

From our first conversations in 1939 I have upheld to you, as well as to all Czechs and Slovaks, the continuity of the Republic, the necessity for a common front of all of us without distinction of party or nationality, common action for the annulment of Munich and the necessity of declaring ourselves unconditionally and unreservedly for the Republic. Already from the beginning I explained my programme to you of establishing a Government at the proper moment and I wished to organise our whole liberation movement with the participation of the German democrats in exile. I told you expressly that if Masaryk or I were in your place we would align ourselves with this policy without reserve, without hesitation and without conditions.

During the whole of the year 1939–1940 you answered that you could not do this, that your party-membership would not agree because they wanted me to give an undertaking concerning the future organisation of the Republic and the position of the Germans in it. I explained to you that I could not give such an undertaking, that I was not authorised to do so, that also I did not admit that anyone was authorised to put such a request to me whether he was a German, a Slovak or Subcarpathian Ruthenian because neither I nor he had received an authorisation on this subject. I refused to give way to Hodža and Osuský as I did not accept their claim to represent the *whole* of Slovakia. I also told you that I accepted you as entitled to speak for a *certain part* of the German Social Democrats of the Republic, but that you could not speak in the name of three million Germans, that you had no more right to agree to or take any decision affecting future policy than I had a similar right to do anything which might prejudice the future of the State in the name of ten million Czechoslovaks. From a democratic standpoint such decisions could only be made by all our people jointly.

I know that you put forward your demand because you thought that our liberation movement would have no success without an agreement of this nature. I thought otherwise. I also know that you were working on the assumption that the situation would evolve in a different way from that which actually occurred. In our last conversation, when I stressed that I considered your whole approach had been wrong, you said that you had been mistaken in two points: you had expected a revolution in Germany and you had expected the war would be a short one.

I, on the contrary, as you know from our conversations and from my public speeches—expected what actually happened. Broadly speaking I made no mistake in any of my principal war hypotheses: the course of events in Germany and in regard to the Soviet Union, America, the occupied Nations and finally the radical stand the whole world took against Hitler—all these things happened as I expected they would happen. It was on this basis that I wanted to organise our whole joint activities with you all before it was too late. I did not fully succeed with the Slovaks (Hodža) or with you.

I had therefore to start working for recognition *without Hodža and without you*. For your part, you mistakenly counted on help from the British. Mistakenly, because finally the British too—in spite of their former Munich errors, or perhaps just because they had committed them—now understand that Czechoslovakia must be re-established substantially in its original form and as strong as possible, thus receiving real justice. They understand that the natural frontiers of the Republic must be restored—Munish itself proved that this is necessary. That is why I obtained the first —'provisional'—recognition. Before this took place, I loyally invited you and kept you informed—as I did everyone who was not yet co-operating fully. And I told you that this was only the beginning and that we were sure to win further successes, that we were sure to reach agreement with the British and with the others. I told you also that I was counting on the participation of America in the war and on receiving American recognition as well as on the participation of the Soviet Union in the war and on Soviet help for our cause.

Nevertheless you did not give up your point of view until the summer of 1941. At that time I often emphasised to you how important it was that as many of our German citizens as possible should join our army spontaneously, voluntarily. I promised you that we should not try to impose compulsory military service on those who did not report voluntarily. Now, as from August 5th, we have agreed to a bill proposed by the British Government making it possible for the citizens of all the Allied Nations to

enter the British Army. We did so because the British Government 'annulled' Munich. But I considered it was a cardinal mistake on your part that you issued calls to your followers to enter the British Army. This was equivalent to saying that *you did not pronounce yourselves unconditionally and unreservedly for the Republic.* I have always deeply deplored this fact, regarding it as a great political mistake which at home, in the Republic, will always be considered politically in the light of the action of those who entered our Army without hesitation.

Such was the state of affairs up to the autumn of 1941. The Soviet Union's entry into the war and the new recognition of the Republic and Government—now absolutely and finally—by Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China (in addition to the American recognition) had had the effect that in our next conversations (especially at the time of your visit to Aston Abbotts in the summer of 1941 and again later) you agreed to enter the State Council without conditions or reservations *though at the same time you kept your former fundamental view of the relations of our Germans to the Republic.*

But by that time at home, and here, too, Czech hatred against the Germans in our country and everything connected with Nazism and Germany in general had alarmingly increased. We were not the only ones to undergo this revulsion of feeling. It manifested itself daily on a gradually rising scale among all Nations and on all sides, including Great Britain. I told you about this very loyally in all our conversations. At Aston Abbotts I even showed you my confidential reports from home. At the time you appreciated this.

After September 28th, following the appointment of Heydrich and its sequel, you all recognised that your participation in the State Council would have to be temporarily postponed. As the result of a series of talks we agreed on the formula: The nomination of German Social Democrats to the State Council is at present impossible but we are agreed that both groups are proceeding on parallel lines along the same path of struggle for the liberation of the Republic without doing anything which could be considered disloyal to this common aim.

Neither from you, nor from others, nor from myself did I conceal my conviction that if you had taken a different line in 1940 and had given up in time your conditions and your reservations (concerning correlations for the future organisation of the Republic and the unconditional enlistment of our German citizens in the Czechoslovak Army), your people would probably have already been in the State Council in December, 1940, together with all the others and the problem of your co-operation would

have been solved long before the arrival of Heydrich and the new wave of new nationalism at home. At that time the British would have regarded this as our great joint success.

Your own disputes about these matters did not, of course, go unnoticed by our people who considered them to be a lack of loyalty towards the Republic and the State on your part, as opportunism and a precaution against what might happen to Germany and in Germany when the war ended. This was used as an argument against your participation and the participation of any Germans at all in our liberation movement. You know what troubles I had about this in the Army.

I would like to end this analysis by stating:

(*a*) It was not right, and in my opinion it was a cardinal political error, that from 1939 to 1941 you made conditions and reservations about your co-operation and about making a definite declaration of your support for the Republic as well as of your participation in the common military struggle on its behalf.

(*b*) In consequence all acts of recognition for our Government at that time had to be reached without your participation (after the first such act, articles and pamphlets were even issued by your Party deprecating this recognition). I regretted then and I still regret that the Party which had so faithfully stood by the Republic in 1938 had got into such a position.

(*c*) When in the autumn of 1941 you changed your attitude (on one point, namely, conditions concerning the future organisation of the Republic—on the question of military service you still maintain the same attitude), the situation was already such that your nomination to the State Council could not be put into effect. This nomination had been intended as a public proof of full agreement and common action.

Such was the course of our discussions and this is how the question of an 'alibi' really stands. But I want to stress that I never concealed from you how the situation was developing, that I was never disloyal to you, that I always loyally kept you informed of my intentions and plans (and of my views about the punishment of war criminals and the transfer of population). Nor did I conceal from you that my aim was definite and full recognition and revocation of Munich and I always told you that we would quite certainly attain our object. I also want to remind you that I intentionally employed officials of German nationality in the Provisional State Organisation—in so far as there were any—and that I also intentionally and deliberately nominated a German member to the Legal Council to show how I wished the situation to develop in this direction too.

I must therefore reject the reproach of having been in any way guilty

of 'non-co-operation' with you, by whomsoever it is made *against me and against our movement.*

6. I am unhappy about having to refer to the last point in this connection: *The Revocation of Munich.* I never concealed from you that I was working for it and I never concealed from you that it would be attained. *But you never disclosed to me your views about this question.* I know that you have been in contact with certain British circles from which you derived expectations which I held to be unjustified. I knew about your activities and your negotiations. I did not consider and I still do not consider that you acted correctly towards us, neither you nor the British circles in question, if and to the extent that your activities were to be used as a weapon against our united resistance movement, and to force us to adopt some other policy. *I took this line towards Hodža and others, I do so also towards you.* I also told the British elements concerned what my views were and I repeat it to you. Furthermore, I considered your broadcasts to Germany from London to be a cardinal error in view of your relations with us. And what is more, the procedure adopted to obtain permission for these broadcasts to be made was not altogether regular. I spoke to you several times about the matter. But when I found that you yourself did not feel you had no right to try to create an international problem out of our joint internal affairs I did not pursue the subject since we could not but feel that you were working *against us.* I did not want to pick a quarrel with you on this matter.* But I have to say this today in answer to your complaints. Did we not see eye-to-eye before Munich *that the Henleinites had not the right to solicit foreign intervention in these very issues ?* We should have taken the opposite line in our work with the British—especially during the war—and should have co-operated, leaving our internal affairs to be solved between our own selves !

I have ascertained that after the exchange of notes of August 5th you have expressed a *negative* view on this issue which for us is so important and far-reaching ! You are said to have expressed yourself in this sense to the British and your Party is said to have prepared a memorandum for President Roosevelt. I did not want to believe it. And I regret that your Party did not publicly and positively express its views about the triumph of justice for our State† for which it fought so devotedly in 1938.

7. I cannot close this letter without giving you proofs of the great, material and tactical political mistakes which you and your political friends must be held to have committed: the number of your publications and

*Recognition of the Provisional Government (Tr.).

†Revocation of Munich (Tr.).

statements which, from the Czech side, have evoked opposition and in my opinion much-justified criticism.

I will give here only the following examples: Wenzel Jaksch 'Was kommt nach Hitler' (What comes after Hitler), p. 16:

'Later the Versailles order (which denied the right of self-determination to the Germans) also broke down. We are therefore resolutely opposed to the dualist principle which would join the Austrian and even the Bavarian Germans to the Danubian combination, merely in order to disrupt once again the power-political factor of Great Germany by the one-sided application of the right of self-determination . . .

'. . . For the Sudeten Germans we demand also the right to decide freely whether they want to live as an autonomous sector of the historical provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, that is to say, in a closer State-union with the Czechs, *or whether they want to be attached as a province to a federal Reich.*'

De Witte: Commentary on W. Jaksch's essay: 'Was kommt nach Hitler':

". . . The union of Austria with Germany has been recognised by all States which matter, and the fusion (Anschluss) of the German Sudeten territory with Germany was expressly approved by Great Britain and France at Munich in 1938. What the Germans of the Reich, the Austrians and also we Sudeten Germans worked for in vain in 1918–19, is an accomplished fact of which the whole world has taken note . . .

'The Sudeten Germans want also to know whether they could expect no more from tomorrow's German democracy in the old Reich than from that of yesterday. And the echo from Vienna interests them at least as much as the echo from Prague. Germany from Memel to Bregenz and from Flensburg to Klagenfurt is just now a fact and this is the time for the democrats of this great Reich to speak up . . .

'The Central European federation as Jaksch imagines it is in reality the resurrection of Austria-Hungary on a different scale and under special conditions . . .'

'Sudeten-Freiheit' (Sudeten Freedom), No. 3, September, 1939, from the article 'Vor 20 Jahren' (Twenty years ago).

'. . . The Sudeten Germans should not be, as in 1919 and in 1938, a pawn in the policy of others. The Sudeten Germans should themselves decide their State citizenship and its form. Their own welfare as well as that of the Czech Nation and the safeguarding of peace make this necessary . . .'

From a circular, dated October 9th, 1939, by Wenzel Jaksch :

'As long as the constitutional future of the Sudeten territory has not been cleared up in a way that we could in due course advocate successfully to the working masses at home, the leaders of the "Treugemeinschaft" are not able to issue a general invitation to enter the Czechoslovak Army . . . Most of our men who are able to perform military service *will in present circumstances prefer voluntary enlistment in the British Army.*'

Ditto, page 4, paragraph 7:

'For the rest, we expect from Czech policy, that it will put forward a new concept which could serve as a suitable basis for a free decision by the Sudeten territory . . .

'The experience of twenty years teaches that a solution satisfactory to both parties is possible only on the basis of Sudeten German autonomy with a separate territorial Government. In any case, the promise of such autonomy would make it easier to *secure a Sudeten German majority for the idea that the Sudeten territory together with the Czechs should form a smaller or greater federal State.*'

De Witte and Katz: 'Einige Grundprinzipien in Sache ČSR und Sudetenland', October 18th, 1938 (some fundamental principles concerning Czechoslovakia and the Sudeten territory):

'. . . The decision *whether, and if so,* on what conditions and guarantees, the Sudeten Germans should form a joint State with the Czechs, *or whether they should join another State* must be reserved to this people themselves. It is necessary to ascertain their views by plebiscite under international control as was done in the case of the voting in the Saar Territory.

'All sympathy for the Czech liberation struggle cannot and must not change the fact that we are not a part of the Czech Nation and that the latter's aim *to re-establish the Czech State—simply cannot be our aim too. We cannot admit that our people should blindly or regardless of the cost enter the Czech legions* and that perhaps they should even fight against our German comrades at home for the re-establishment of the Czech State. Who among us goes to war must know that he is fighting for *his* Nation, for *its* freedom and *its* better future . . .

'. . . We must not further Czech aspirations, or simply copy the Czechs of the years 1914–1918. We must not—remembering the Pittsburgh Agreement and the experience of the Slovaks in this regard—*be satisfied with agreements with the Czechs concerning mere intentions to grant autonomy or federation.*'

Wenzel Jaksch: Foreign Policy Aims of Sudeten German Social Democracy, October, 1939:

'Twice in twenty years it has been decided unilaterally to which State the Sudeten territory should belong. By the dictate of Saint-Germain Czechoslovakia has been burdened for twenty years with unsolved nationality problems . . . We demand the right of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans . . .

'We do not deny that the Munich frontiers have in many cases violated the principle of nationality and that inside those frontiers a re-established State of the Czechs and Slovaks would not be capable of living. But as a part of the Sudeten German Nation we must above all defend the interests of this Nation. After twenty years' experience, therefore, we must refuse to join the Sudeten German Nation to a preponderantly Czech State under the same or similar conditions to those which existed up to the time of the Munich Agreement. It is our profound conviction that such a solution would contain the seeds of new conflicts.

'Three million Sudeten Germans need an administrative centre in the form of an autonomous territorial Government . . . Any lasting democratic settlement of the relations between Czechs and Sudeten Germans must be based *on the recognition of a compact German linguistic territory in Bohemia and Moravia.*'

From a circular by Wenzel Jaksch, dated November 24th, 1939:

'There has been no deterioration in the situation of the refugees in spite of war conditions. But we are under no illusions that if the war goes on the present standard of care for the refugees can be maintained. *We have therefore decided to recommend in the enclosed directions that the able-bodied men should voluntarily enter the British Army.*'

From a circular by W. Jaksch, dated January 17th, 1940:

'Without the clearing up of certain preliminary questions concerning the legal position of the Sudeten territory, *we could not recommend unconditional enlistment in the Czech Army abroad.* We have chosen rather to recommend our able-bodied friends *to enlist voluntarily in the British Army. From the standpoint of international law the question of the Sudeten territory belonging to the Czechs is open and* a fresh decision will not be taken without our participation . . .'

From a letter of W. Jaksch published in *The New Statesman and Nation* of February 24th, 1940, under the title of 'Future of Czechoslovakia', p. 242:

'In the interest entirely of democracy in the Sudeten territory we must remain independent in our relations with the (Czechoslovak) National Committee while completely sympathising with it . . . While these questions are still unsettled *we must give Sudeten Germans abroad the choice of volunteering either for the British or the Czech Army.*'

From a speech by W. Jaksch at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the German Social Democratic Party on March 9th, 1940, at the Holmhurst Hotel, Loughton, Essex:

'In our deliberations we must not stand where we used to stand. *The reason is that this State (Czechoslovakia) no longer exists.* At that time we were in an abnormal position. *We were obliged to oppose autonomy for the Sudeten territory so that we should not be delivered wholly into the hands of the Henleinites . . .* Our declaration must be based on the following principles : (1) *A solution by treaty ; (2) equal rights for nations, not only for individuals.* As to the question of a Provisional Government : This is not only a question of a provincial form of Government but also of a provisional parliament of the Sudeten Germans. The theory of the legal personality of the Nation is in practice the Provincial Parliament and provincial sovereignty in regard to taxation . . .'

From the declaration of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party 'Uber die künftige Stellung des Sudetengebietes im Rahmen einer demokratischföderalistischen Neuordnung Europas' (On the future position of the Sudeten territory in a democratic-federalistic reorganisation of Europe), March 10th, 1940, p. 8.

'We claim a peace of agreement also for the population of the Sudeten territory. Twice in twenty years it has been decided unilaterally to which State they should belong. By the dictate of Saint-Germain, Czechoslovakia was burdened for twenty years with unsolved nationality problems . . .

'*We demand the right of self-determination for three million Sudeten Germans.*'

From an article 'So sprechen unsere Canadier' (So speak our Canadians), published in *Freundschaft* (Friendship), No. 3, March, 1941:

'*It can hardly be expected that the majority of our comrades will recognise without compulsion the authority of the Czechoslovak Government abroad* so long as our competent representatives have not received assurances *which will make it impossible for the last twenty years of the Czechoslovak Republic to be repeated.* Voluntary recognition could only be realised if the present

Czechoslovak Government abroad were ready to accept the principles expressed in Point IV of our Party's declaration of March 10th, 1940.'

From a circular by W. Jaksch dated March 10th, 1941:

'. . . In permanent contact with our Executive Committee I therefore proposed: *We will support the pre-Munich frontiers but we demand* from the Government a declaration that the new Constitution will be drafted after mutual agreement and not be dictated to us . . .'

From the circular by W. Jaksch dated January 23rd, 1942:

'. . . The aim of Czech policy *is invariably a maximum increase of national power after the war.* It would be convenient for our partners if this development took place with our formal consent . . .'

From the circular by W. Jaksch dated March 23rd, 1942:

'. . . *That* a certain number of *our comrades belong to British units has a deeper meaning. In the days of decision, what happens will depend only on our strength.* Many, if not all of you, *will*, so far as human foresight can judge *be more easily transferred to the service of our cause* if you remain in some British unit till that time.'

From the circular by W. Jaksch dated June, 1942:

'Nevertheless, if there were readiness on the Czech side to solve these problems according to recognised democratic principles, we would not hesitate to issue the appropriate uniform directions to our comrades. *But if an attempt should be made* to exercise any *pressure* against our people and to call them individually to military service, *then such an attempt to dictate* to men who have had experience of fighting *will justify the political and moral decision of every comrade to join the British Army. The Executive Committee of the Party is fully aware of its responsibility in this question also.*'

8. I want to stress that the political memorandum you wrote and distributed *in the summer of 1939*, especially part IV, contains *an express demand that the Czechoslovak Germans should be able to choose freely between either Czechoslovakia or becoming a province in a great all-German Reich.* Moreover, that memorandum is founded on the quite incorrect views that the smaller Central European Nations—after the period of Nazism and after all that Germany has done to them—would be morally, psychologically and politically ready to enter a political union with a Germany whose future after the war and for thirty years to come is unpredictable.

After what has happened in Germany, the *German people* will have first to make amends for the past and then for a certain period follow such a policy that the European Nations may regain at least some measure of confidence in her. That means that a really final *peaceful* solution of European problems can only be expected after some considerable time, perhaps even several decades.

9. I hereby declare that in general all your Party's decisions which are also repeated in your resolution of October 4th, 1942, follow the political line contained in all the above quotations. In essence, their content and sense is the following:

(*a*) We do not accept and do not advocate the legal continuity of the Republic.

(*b*) Each of our declarations about the Czechoslovak State is conditional and leaves a way open for an alternative solution.

(*c*) It has never been clear whether your profession of Czechoslovak citizenship is *a matter of principle* or whether it relates only to the temporary fact that, formally, you hold Czechoslovak passports and that the British and other authorities consider you to be Czechoslovaks.

(*d*) Your people do not and did not feel themselves bound to fulfil their duty as citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic not only before the legal integrity of the Republic was fully recognised internationally but also not even when recognition was accorded. And they still maintain this attitude today (e.g. your resolution about military service).

(*e*) In our last conversation I told you privately that not even your last resolution was satisfactory. I will give you my reasons: Not only did you not use the occasion of the annulment of Munich to express a correct attitude towards the true international reality but you also repeated once more all the obscurities mentioned above, all the indecisions and your deliberately chosen policy of conditionality. *On the contrary, you say in the resolution that the annulment of Munich leaves your aims unchanged.*

I gladly admit that at the end of your resolution you say that you recognise the necessity of postponing all constitutional questions. This will facilitate your agreement with the Czechoslovak Government. But even now you have not said clearly and unambiguously whether you are Czechoslovaks or not, whether you have still any reservations with regard to your unconditional and clear allegiance to the State, whether you stand fully and unconditionally behind our State or whether you do not. Are these tactics? Or indecision? *Or is this a resolution intended to hold a back-door open for various alternatives?*

10. This is the present situation. Do you think it possible that any Czechoslovak—and not only a Czechoslovak but any Allied politician—would understand if there were nominated to the State Council or among the Czechoslovak civil servants someone who until now has never publicly declared himself to be a Czechoslovak citizen, who refuses to fulfil his civic duties and who still *makes conditions* about his belonging to the State and still leaves a door open so that he can advocate a different view later on ?

I do not think that this impossible situation can continue any longer.

With cordial greetings,

Yours,

(Signed) Dr. Ed. Beneš

Aston Abbotts, January 10th, 1943.

To Deputy W. Jaksch, London.

Memorandum from President Dr. Eduard Beneš to the Holy See, delivered to President F. D. Roosevelt on May 12th, 1943:

I. On January 7th, 1941, President Dr. E. Beneš delivered to the Apostolic representative in Great Britain, His Excellency Monseigneur William Godfrey, a letter stressing the following:

Immediately after the armistice in 1918, as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Republic, I began diplomatic negotiations with the Holy See and started to discuss the delimitation of the dioceses, church property, etc. There were many difficulties in 1924 and again in 1927 when new and grave misunderstandings arose. But in 1927 I succeeded in definitely solving all these problems by creating a definitive legal basis for our future relations. The so-called *modus vivendi* between the Holy See and the Czechoslovak Republic was accepted and normal and friendly relations were definitely established. Since that time their mutual relations have been good and co-operation has developed without difficulties. In particular, I cannot forget the extremely sympathetic attitude of His Holiness Pope Pius XI towards Czechoslovakia during the September crisis of 1938 and the message sent to me in the most critical moment of the history of my Nation.

For these reasons I have come to the conclusion that the time has arrived when some kind of unofficial contact should be established between the new Czechoslovak Government, residing now in London, and the Holy See. All previous agreements on church problems between the Vatican and the Republic have been destroyed by the Nazi Government. Conditions in Slovakia are very bad and the subjection of the present Tiso Government will have a very profound influence on the position of the Catholic Church in Slovakia after this war. The persecution of Czech Catholics by the Nazis in the Czech 'Protectorate' will also be of great importance for the post-war policy of the Czech Nation.

Poles, Belgians and others continue to maintain such relations and they are enabled to discuss matters of common interest and their post-war policy with the Holy See. Since March, 1939, up to the present day, Czechoslovaks have not been offered such an opportunity. The Slovak delegate with the Holy See is the representative of a State which is wholly in the hands of the Nazi Government. I think that in these conditions it is extremely desirable to make timely preparations for the future.

I ask your pardon for explaining my view to you so frankly. But in this dreadful war in which the whole of Christian civilisation is at stake and in which the Holy See—as can be seen from the Christmas message of His

Holiness Pope Pius XII—has taken an unambiguous attitude by adopting the policy of a just peace for all small Nations, I deem it to be the duty of all responsible persons not to miss the smallest opportunity to do what they consider necessary in the interests of their people who have so much at stake.

II. On May 19th, 1941, His Grace Monseigneur William Godfrey delivered to President Dr. E. Beneš the answer of the Holy See in which it is stated:

'His Eminence declares that he has read with great interest of your participation in the negotiations which, in spite of considerable difficulties, ended in the *modus vivendi* of 1927. His Eminence is especially pleased with your courteous remark about the Church and the sublime Pope Pius XII whose chief concern is a just and lasting peace, secured not by hatred and revenge but by the sublime majesty of justice. His Holiness has already expressed this wish on June 2nd, 1940, and again not long ago in his Christmas message to the world.

'The Pope and the Holy See feel for every Nation in its sufferings and are always seeking faithfully to fulfil their pastoral mission entrusted by God to the Church and to help the suffering in every way.

'It is therefore quite natural that the Czechoslovak people have a special place in the motherly heart of the Church. With regard to the step taken by Your Excellency directed to the establishment of unofficial relations between the Czechoslovak Government, formed in London not long ago, and the Holy See, His Eminence is convinced that your Excellency will understand how delicate the present situation is and how difficult it would be at the present time to afford to the Czechoslovak people the advantages of such relations. His Eminence thinks that the proper moment for such a development has not yet come.'

III. More than two years have elapsed since then and the military and political situation of the world has undergone a fundamental change. Particularly in the military sphere there have entered the war on the side of the Allied Nations the Soviet Union in June, 1941, and the United States of America in December, 1941. By this the potential balance of power has shifted to the side of the Allied Nations. Since November, 1942, this has been shown on the battlefields and today it is quite clear, even in the Axis States, that they can no longer win the war. The Czechoslovak Government considers it to be certain, especially since the Casablanca Conference, that the chief military and political aims of the Allied Nations will undoubtedly be realised. One of these aims is the re-establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. The fact that supporting this aim there stand

—in addition to all the other members—the four leading Powers of the Allied Nations, Great Britain, the United States of America, the Soviet Union and China, is a guarantee to the Czechoslovak Government, that Czechoslovakia will be liberated and re-established together with all other countries occupied by the Axis States.

IV. In the sphere of international policy so much has already been done in this respect that diplomatically and in international law we have no doubts today about the outcome of the war. Above all, in our view, the Czechoslovak Republic has never ceased to exist in international law. This is the view of a number of other States. Great Britain and the United States of America, for instance, have never recognised the events of March, 1939, *de jure* as is proved by the continuing recognition of the Czechoslovak Legations in London and Washington. The development of the war made it possible for the representatives of the Czechoslovak people in the allied countries to establish an organised military and political movement on the basis of the irreconcilable resistance of all classes of the Czechoslovak people at home against the Germans. This movement, which formed its Czechoslovak National Army and Government, was recognised politically and in international law in July, 1940, as the Government and Army of an allied Nation and State waging war against Nazi Germany and as the legal political representative of the Czechoslovak people at home and of the Czechoslovak State.

It must therefore be remembered that since July, 1940, the Czechoslovak State and its internationally recognised Government have resumed all their former rights and in respect of international law have once more become vested with the same competence and with the same political, diplomatic, military and international position as Poland, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, Yugoslavia and Greece today. The Czechoslovak Government, led by its former President, has again been recognised as the legal Government of the former State by nearly all those Governments and States which, before the outbreak of the second World War, maintained strict neutrality or have later entered the war against Germany, and have not recognised either what happened at Munich in September, 1938, or what Nazi Germany has done in March, 1939, against Czechoslovakia by violence and in disregard of all obligations.

In this sense Czechoslovakia has been fully recognised diplomatically and internationally by Great Britain (and most of the Dominions) and the Soviet Union on July 18th, 1941, by the United States on July 31st, 1941, and by China on August 27th, 1941. Diplomatic relations and mutual recognition was effected with Norway on October 12th, 1940, with

Poland on November 27th, 1940, with Belgium on December 13th, 1940, with Egypt on March 13th, 1941, with the Netherlands on March 15th, 1941, with Yugoslavia on May 19th, 1941, with Eire on July 28th, 1941, with Luxembourg on February 27th, 1942, with Mexico on March 26th, 1942, with Iran on May 27th, 1942, and with Greece on August 19th, 1942. In addition, the new Government of the Czechoslovak Republic was recognised by Bolivia on June 5th, 1942, by Uruguay on June 29th, 1942, by Cuba on July 4th, 1942, by Peru on July 6th, 1942, by the Dominican Republic on July 10th, 1942, by Brazil on September 16th, 1942, by Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador on January 9th, 1943, and by Chile on March 31st, 1943. The representation of the Czechoslovak Republic at the League of Nations and the International Labour Office never ceased to exist and with some neutral countries, *de facto* representation and contact continues.

I emphasise this position in international law which best shows the present situation of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Czechoslovak Nation and its Government in London in international policy and which already today expresses the situation as it will be after the war.

The Government of the Czechoslovak Republic remarks that all these Governments have recognised a united Czechoslovakia (the Czech provinces and Slovakia) and also, that the Munich Agreement of September 29th, 1938, has been violated by Germany herself. In consequence of this, His Majesty's Government declared in their Note to the Czechoslovak Government of August 5th, 1942, that they consider themselves freed from all obligations concerning agreements about Czechoslovakia made at Munich in 1938. The French National Committee presided over by General De Gaulle has done the same. The Soviet Government has expressly recognised the Czechoslovak Republic in its frontiers of the time before September, 1938. The other States and Nations had no part in the Munich Agreement. The violent occupation of Subcarpathian Ruthenia by Hungary in 1939 has not been recognised *de jure* by any of the countries mentioned.

V. The Czechoslovak people, and later the newly recognised Government of the Czechoslovak Republic, have watched with special attention the actions of the Holy See in Czechoslovak affairs during the present dreadful international crisis. They have gratefully welcomed the action of the Holy See in the matter of filling the Archiepiscopal See of Prague after the death of His Eminence Cardinal Kašpar. They understood the difficulties arising for the Holy See from the behaviour of the German and Hungarian Governments in the Czech 'Lands' as well as in Slovakia and

Subcarpathian Ruthenia. They would have preferred that—as these were still unfinished war events—all countries and Powers with which the Czechoslovak Republic was in diplomatic relations until September, 1938, should have observed at least an attitude of neutrality in the same spirit as the United States of America or Great Britain, which never—neither before nor after the outbreak of the war in 1939—interrupted their diplomatic relations with the Czechoslovak Legations in Washington and London. The Czechoslovak Government realised that the Holy See was unable to take a similar attitude but this could of course give rise to certain complications between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Holy See at the end of this war.

The Czechoslovak Government, taking into consideration the present attitude of the Holy See and especially the presence of a representative of Slovakia at the Vatican, is already deliberating how these difficulties might be avoided. It takes this opportunity to state the following about the present internal situation in the Czechoslovak countries:

All Czechoslovaks, except an insignificant number of individuals, are against present-day Germany. They never did and never will recognise what has been done to our country by Germany since September, 1938, and they stand unreservedly behind the present Czechoslovak Government which has its seat in London.

Today, the great majority of Slovaks take the same attitude. In Slovakia political, social, economic and moral conditions are extremely deplorable. The majority of Slovaks consider the present Government in Bratislava responsible for this situation and consider it to be a traitor to the Slovak people and to the Czechoslovak Republic. The former Slovak Government parties of the days before March 15th, 1939 (the Agrarians, Liberals, Socialists) stand almost unanimously behind the Czechoslovak Government and against the present regime in Slovakia. According to our reports nearly 60 per cent of the former Catholic Popular Party which in 1939 accepted the management of Slovak affairs from the Germans are today opposed to the present regime. They reproach it for entering into alliance with pagan German Nazism, with agreeing to declare war against Poland, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as well as against the Czechoslovak Government and with having brought about the present politically untenable position in Slovakia. The Holy See may have received different information about the situation in Slovakia. But I consider it my duty to put before the Holy See objectively the information based on reports which have arrived regularly from our country during the past two years.

In these circumstances grave disturbances could take place in Slovakia at the end of the war, the consequences of which, if the situation is not taken in hand in time, could be very far-reaching. The fact that this Slovak régime, which will certainly fare very badly when the war ends, is recognised by the Holy See and that the Holy See has accepted its representative, is a cause of great uneasiness for all faithful Czechoslovaks and especially for the Czechoslovak Catholics.

VI. The object of this memorandum is to describe the whole international and internal situation of the Czechoslovak people and the Czechoslovak State in connection with Czechoslovak church problems. Without doubt Slovakia will again be part of the Czechoslovak Republic. The Czechoslovak Government in London considers that after the war the Czech and Slovak people will regulate their mutual relations themselves freely and democratically by a new revision of the former Constitution. It would therefore like to prepare the situation so that the post-war problems of religion and of the church should not be unnecessarily complicated and especially that the relations of the Czechoslovak Republic and the Holy See should be neither complicated nor again the object of any special and long negotiations or disputes in consequence of what happened during the war.

Since 1919 I have personally conducted all discussions for the Czechoslovak Republic with the Holy See and I remember how difficult they have often been. I would not like this to happen again. After long and difficult discussions not only did I reach full agreement with the Holy See, but the people and Parliament of Czechoslovakia ratified the agreement of December 17th, 1927, the so-called *modus vivendi* which was joyfully accepted by all Czech and Slovak Catholics. I have consistently advocated that these agreements should be kept and so between 1927 and 1938 the individual clauses of the *modus vivendi* have been carried out. I think the simplest solution would be if, before the end of the war, we could return to the former *status quo* without any further complications, explanations and discussion by simply renewing the former normal diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the Czechoslovak Republic and if we could solve the concrete problems arising from this dreadful war in the spirit of the *modus vivendi*, at the time of the fall of Germany. The Czechoslovak Government would welcome this. Without doubt this course would avoid many difficulties which otherwise will certainly arise in view of the chaos which will certainly supervene in Central Europe after the defeat of the Axis countries.

VII. If the Holy See does not consider this course to be possible or

proper, or if the Holy See considers that such a procedure could be only applied to a limited extent in view of the circumstances of the war, the Czechoslovak Government would be grateful for an expression of the views of the Holy See on these delicate matters. In this connection the Czechoslovak Government wishes to emphasise that it considers it its duty to provide for the consolidation of post-war conditions already at this moment. The Czechoslovak Catholics will be a consolidating factor. We wish to secure their co-operation in the post-war Government. For their co-operation it will certainly be essential that the relations between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Holy See are regularised in time. I believe that Czechoslovakia will be one of the first Central European countries to consolidate after the present war. The Czechoslovak Government therefore wishes to make all preparations in sufficient time to ensure continuity in its policy from the moment when the relations between the Holy See and our country have been consolidated and become normal and friendly.

At the present moment when—this of course is my personal conviction —it has become clear to me in broad outline what the course of events will be this year and how the present dreadful war will end, I consider it my duty to approach the Holy See with this memorandum. After the war I wish to render account to the Czechoslovak people of the activities of our Government in its church policy, among others, and to show that we have not neglected any angle of our international relations. I would be happy if we could take a real step forward and thus secure the future successful development of relations between the Holy See and the Czechoslovak Republic. After the tribulations, severe persecutions and immense sufferings inflicted by the Nazi Germans on the Czech countries, as well as on Slovakia under its present regime, this would be a well-deserved benefit for our Czechoslovak people.

Moreover, the post-war difficulties which might supervene in church and religious matters as a consequence of the war would be avoided or at the least limited to a minimum. This would be to the advantage of both interested parties: the Holy See and the Czechoslovak Republic.*

DR. EDUARD BENEŠ.

London, May, 1943.

*This memorandum was also sent to the Vatican on July 15th, 1943, through the British Government. (Tr.).

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